

LETTERS,

FROM

M. DE VOLTAIRE.

TO SEVERAL OF

HIS FRIENDS.

TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH

BY THE REV. DR. FRANKLIN.

DUBLIN:

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VOLTAIRE'S LETTERS.



LETTER * I.

To M. Le Chevalier de BRUANT.

I WAS not at *** when your letter came; you embarrass me greatly; I shall only answer you for the pleasure of entertaining myself with a man who is much better able to resolve the doubts which he proposed, than the person to whom he sent them.

I am not of your opinion with regard to despotism and despotic princes. It appears

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to

* The three first letters are not Voltaire's, but supposed to be written by the celebrated author of L'Esprit des Loix, and seem worthy of him.

to me horrible and absurd to the last degree, that a whole people should blindly subject themselves to the caprice of one, even if he were an angel. For my own part, I would not live under him a single day. This angel may become in a moment a monster, thirsting after blood. Despotism is to me the most abominable and disgusting of all bad governments; man is perpetually crushed, debased, and degraded by it. Look into history, ancient and modern, if ever there was one upon earth that was not an insult on mankind, and the disgrace of human nature. Monarchy would doubtless be the best of governments, if it was possible to find such kings as Henry IV. the only one who ever deserved the homage and veneration of his subjects. Kings should always be brought up in the school of affliction, as this great man was; such alone are truly great, and the lovers of mankind. Before we can feel for the misfortunes of others, we must ourselves have been unfortunate. But on the other hand, the hearts of princes, corrupted by prosperity and the slaves of pride and folly, are inaccessible to pity, and insensible of true glory.

I am not at all surpris'd, that in monarchies, and especially in our own, there should be so few princes worthy of esteem. Incircled by corruptors, knaves, and hypocrites, they accustom themselves to look upon their fellow-



low-creatures with disdain, and set no value on any but the sycophants; who care for their vices, and live in perpetual idleness and inactivity. Such is generally the condition of a monarch; great men are always scarce, and great kings still more so. Add to this, that the splendor of a monarchy is short and transitory. France is already sunk into misery and disgrace; an age more will annihilate her, or she will fall a prey to the first intrepid conqueror.

The English government has nothing to support it but a delusive outside, extremely flattering to the people, who fancy themselves the sole governors. I do not know any country where it is more easy to create such open dissensions as may overthrow the state. A man of sense and generosity may, in ten years time, erect himself into a despotic prince with more safety at London than at Moscow: remember Cromwell. Money alone is sufficient to corrupt the whole parliament.

The great, ever fond of riches and power, and prostrate at the feet of fortune, who always attends the throne, will promote the views of their master; and the great once gained over, this phantom of liberty, which appeared at intervals in the convulsive motions of the commons, which awakens, shakes itself, and soon vanishes, will be totally.

tally annihilated at the first signal given by the supreme ruler.

I know indeed of no monarchy that is fixed, constant, and perfect; the wisest kings oppress their subjects to arrive at despotism. Adieu, my friend; live in freedom and obscurity. Solitude will procure you the best and truest pleasure, self-content. The foolish and the wicked seen afar off, will only excite your compassion; to look nearly upon them, would raise your contempt and indignation.

I write this in haste; we will treat this matter more fully in the free intercourse of guiltless friendship.

LETTER

L E T T E R II.

YOU ask me in what country a man may enjoy the most perfect liberty? In every place, my dear Philinthus, where there are men and laws. The wise man is free even in the court of a tyrant, because his happiness depends on himself. Reason and conscience are the throne of his liberty. It is not in the power of fortune, injustice, or any thing else to unhinge his soul, or disturb his repose. He rejoices in himself, and his joy is always calm, permanent, and delightful.

Would you, my friend, because you see violence and iniquity every day committed by wicked ministers, by the rich and great, by almost every man in place and power; would you therefore intirely banish yourself from that society to which you are indebted for every thing, and for which every honest and good member of it should yield up all, without repining at the injuries which he suffers from it? Because a prince buries himself in sloth and debauchery; because he persecutes, oppresses, and destroys, shall you become an exile from your country, leave your friends, and desert the poor and afflicted, who apply to you for relief, and

rend your heart with their complaints? No, my friend, you have too much sensibility. Despise the unjust and cruel prince; but love mankind, and above all the unfortunate and distressed. Avoid the impetuous whirlwinds of a court; forget, if possible, that your king is surrounded with perverse, wicked, and oppressive men, who laugh at his ignorance, and avail themselves of his weakness. Fly to retirement, in search of that repose, friendship and felicity, which are never to be found in the seats of power and grandeur, or in the dangerous and delusive tumults of a noisy metropolis. Bring with you a few friends, as worthy and sensible as yourself. Read Plato, Montagne, Charron, and Rabelais; exercise yourself in acts of kindness to the poor labourers, the only creatures upon earth who are always miserable, perpetually toiling to supply the necessities of nature, and victims to the cruel rapacity of the farmers-general, who grind and oppress them.

Thus will you enjoy the most delicate and lively of all pleasures, the pleasure of doing good, the only consolation that can reconcile us to the miseries of human life. When once you are habituated to a country life, joy and peace will revive in your disquieted and uneasy mind, which will grow strong and great, raising itself by degrees to the celestial regions of genius and philosophy.

phy. There, free as the air you breathe, throw out your thoughts as they arise; your soul will then shoot forth such divine flames as shall warm and enlighten even the cold and ignorant. When you have filled your paper, arrange and correct the whole, and I will tell you with the utmost freedom my opinion of it. Adieu, my dear friend: with a heart of such delicate sensibility as yours is, youth, health, and a tolerable fortune, you must be happy, if happiness is the portion of virtue.

LETTER

There is one radical vice in France, which may perhaps never be extinguished; it comes from the women, who

LETTER III.

YOU are right, my dear Philinthus, in believing and asserting to all your friends that education makes the man. That alone is the parent of every virtue; it is the most sacred, the most useful, and at the same time the most neglected thing in almost every country, and in every station of life. But too many vague and impracticable rules have been laid down on this important subject. Even the wise Locke, the great instructor of mankind, is sometimes mistaken, like other writers. All education should have an eye to government, or we lose our aim. The man of patience and understanding will consider well the mind he has to form and instruct; he will infuse by little and little maxims adapted to his age, and suited to his genius, rank, and capacity. I know that there are some soils barren and ungrateful, and which will never answer the labour of the cultivator. But besides that such are very uncommon, I am inclined to suspect, that frequently the tiller has neither strength nor skill enough to dig into and improve it as he ought.

There is one radical vice in France, which may perhaps never be extirpated, because it comes from the women, who, amongst

amongst us, interfere in every thing, and in the end ruin and destroy every thing. A child is soon spoiled in their hands, from two years old to six, when he is delivered up, without consideration, to a man whom he has neither seen nor known. The tutor, perhaps a fellow of no character, takes charge of him, not from inclination, but merely for his own interest. For ten succeeding years he vegetates in the narrow circle of a college, or in the unimproving converse and society of prating females of quality. These tutors are generally appointed by the women, who seldom look any further than the outside; never considering personal merit, which they have not sense enough to distinguish, having never habituated themselves to reflect one moment on any thing serious or useful.

Another circumstance highly prejudicial to education, and which disgusts and deters men of merit from engaging in it, is the little regard paid to the tutor or preceptor, who ought to be respected as a father, whose place he is in a great measure intended to supply: he to whom is intrusted the heir of an illustrious name and family; he who is to form the worthy citizen, and the good subject; who is to do honour to his rank and character, and become the glory of his country. Such are the men, charged as they are with so important an office, who, in the fashionable

fashionable world, are so often despised and ill-treated, and even sometimes suffered to perish for want. Such abuses, if they become general, must point out a shameful and universal depravity of manners. Our nobility indeed are free from this reproach; if they pay but indifferently, they make amends by the weight of their interest, and a thousand engaging civilities, for the small appointment which their fortune will permit them to allow. Your rich financiers, on the other hand, who are naturally morose, proud, and ostentatious, seldom pay a man without affronting him; having nothing but money to give, they gorge you with it.

In France the women ruin every thing, because they think themselves fit for every thing, and the men are weak and childish enough to humour their caprice. Nature notwithstanding made them but to obey, and the weakness of their constitution every day points out to us the weakness of their sex. With regard to education, it is worse at court than in any other place; the governor having a despotic power over his pupil, suffers him to grow up in ignorance and idleness, fills his head with the nonsense of fashion, and puffs him up with the notion of his own rank, and a contempt of the insignificant creatures that crawl beneath him. Every thing around him is to be made

subservient

subservient to his pleasure or advancement. Every thing is to fall down before him on the first notice. He never talks to him concerning the royal virtues that adorn a throne, justice, courage, beneficence, intrepidity, and the love of glory; and therefore it is, that, amongst our kings, we never see a great man; for I call not the conqueror by that name, but rather consider him as the terror, scourge, and disgrace of human-kind; one whom the people are bound by their own interest to destroy, as soon as the flame of his ambition breaks forth in projects of slaughter and oppression.

Lewis XII. was honest and just, but weak and ignorant. Francis I. a vain boaster, cruel, and a pretender to wit. Henry IV. brave and magnanimous; but too much given to women ever to become a philosopher. Lewis XIV. at once the greatest and meanest of mankind, would have excelled all the monarchs in the universe, if he had not been corrupted in his youth by base and ambitious flatterers. A slave during his whole life to pride and vain-glory, he never really loved his subjects, even for a moment; yet expected at the same time, like a true arbitrary prince, that they should sacrifice themselves to his will and pleasure. Intoxicated with power and grandeur, he imagined the whole world was made but to promote his happiness. He was feared, obeyed,

ed, idolized, hated, mortified, and abandoned. He lived like a sultan, and died like a woman. His reign was immortalized by the lowest of his subjects.

It is therefore, my dear Philinthus, impossible there should ever be a great man amongst our kings, who are made brutes and fools of all their lives, by a set of infamous wretches, who surround and beset them from the cradle to the grave.

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LETTERS

FROM

MR. VOLTAIRE.

LETTER I.

To M. L'Abbé D'OLIVET, Chancellor of
the French Academy.

Ferney, Aug. 20. 1761.

YOU advised me, my dear chancellor,
to write notes only on those pieces of Cor-
neille which are in possession of the stage.
This I suppose you did with a view of light-
ening my burden, and I acquiesced in it,
not so much from idleness, as from the de-
sire I had of gratifying the public with more
expedition:

expedition: but I perceive that my retreat has afforded me greater leisure than I imagined it would; and having already commented all the plays that are acted, find that I have still time to make some useful observations on the rest.

There are some curious anecdotes worth knowing, particularly with regard to my remarks on the language. I find, for instance, several words grown obsolete amongst us, and even totally forgotten, which our neighbours the English make use of with success. They have a term to signify true comic pleasantry, that gaiety and urbanity, those natural sallies which escape a man even without his own consciousness of them. This idea they express by the word * *humour*, which they pronounce *yûmour*, and which they imagine is possessed by themselves alone, and that other nations have no term which sufficiently marks out this species of wit:

* The definition which Mr. Voltaire has here given us of humour, considered as a species of wit, seems to be a very imperfect one. Mr. Addison has indeed observed (see Spectator, N^o 35.) that it is much easier to describe what is not humour than what is, and very difficult to define it, otherwise than as Cowley has done wit, by negatives. Mr. Addison has likewise remarked, in another place (Spectator, N^o 616.) that ridicule is never more strong than when it is congealed in gravity: That true humour lies in the thought, and arises from the representation of images in odd circumstances, and uncommon lights.

wit: it is notwithstanding an old word in our language, and used in this sense in several of the comedies of Corneille. When I say that this humour is a kind of urbanity, I apply myself only to the man of letters, who must know how strangely we have wrested the word * *urbanitas* to politeness, though the Latin was certainly received at Rome in another sense, and meant precisely what the English call humour; in this sense it is taken by Horace, when he says,

Frontis ad urbanæ descendi præmia;

and never in any other in that satire attributed to Petronius, and which so many tasteless critics have ascribed to a consul of that name.

The word *partie* (or part) is likewise to be met with in Corneille's comedies, and made to signify wit: such a man has parts, as the English say: the term is an excellent one. It is the property of man to have nothing but parts; he has one species of wit, one kind of talent, but never possesses them all together. The word wit is too vague an expression, and when they tell you such a man

* Te hominem non solum sapientem, verum etiam ut nunc loquimur, urbanum, says Tully. And in another place, Homo facetus, inducis sermonem facetum & urbanum.

man has wit, you have a right to ask, of what sort?

How many words do we want now, which had great energy and strength in the time of Corneille, and how much have we lost, either from mere negligence, or too much delicacy! A time or a rendezvous was *assigned* or *appointed*; he who arrived at the place agreed on, and did not meet with the persons who had made the promise, was * *disappointed*. We have no word at present to express the precise situation of a man who keeps his word whilst another breaks it.

We have given up some phrases absolutely necessary, which the English have happily availed themselves of: a street or path-way, without a thoroughfare, was very properly expressed by the word *nonpasse*, or *impasse*, which the English have imitated. We are forced now to make use of that low and vulgar phrase *cul-de-sac*, which occurs so often, and disgraces the French language.

I should

* It seems rather extraordinary that when Mr. Voltaire was comparing the English and French words together, he should forget our word *disappoint*, and not observe, as he has done with regard to the word humour, that Mr. Corneille, and other writers of that time, most probably took it from us.

I should never have done with this article, were I to enumerate all the happy phrases which we borrowed from the Italians, and have since lost: not that our own language wants copiousness or energy, but that it certainly might have more. What has robbed us of our most valuable stock is that heap of frivolous books which have lately appeared, written in the stile of common conversation, and stuffed with modish phrases, and improper expressions. We are impoverished by our abundance.

But I proceed to an article of more importance, and which has determined me to pursue my comments even to Pertharite. Amidst these ruins we may find some hidden treasures. Who would imagine, for example, that in Pertharite one should discover the seeds of Pyrrhus and Andromache, or that Racine had borrowed from it the sentiments, or even the expression? And yet nothing is more true or self-evident. Grimoald, in Corneille, threatens Rodelind that he will destroy her child in the cradle, if she will not consent to marry him.

* Son sort est en vos mains; aimer ou dedaigner,
Le va faire périr, ou le faire régner.

The

* I have given the original as well as a translation of these passages, that those who understand the French

The choice is thine, to love or to despise;
To give your son a crown, or see him perish.

Pyrrhus says exactly the same thing in the
same situation:

Je vous le dis, il faut, ou périr ou régner.

I say again, a crown or death await you.

Grimoald, in *Corneille*, is for punishing:

Sur ce fils innocent

La dureté d'un cœur si peu reconnoissant.

On the guiltless son

The cruel mother's base ingratitude.

Pyrrhus says, in *Racine*:

Le fils me repondra des mepris de la mere.

The son shall answer for the mother's scorn.

Rodelind says to Grimoald:

Compte, penes y bien, & pour m'avoir aimée

N'imprime point de tâche à tant de renommée.

French language may be better able to determine
with regard to the propriety of Mr. Voltaire's remarks
on them.

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Ne crois que ta vertu ; laisse la seule agir,
 De peur qu'un tel effort ne te donne à rougir ;
 On publiroit de toi que le cœur d'une femme
 Plus que ta propre gloire, auroit touché ton ame ;
 On diroit qu'un heros si grand, si renommé
 Ne seroit qu'un tyran, s'il n'avoit point aimé.

Think well on this, my lord, nor stain a name
 Unspotted yet, with inhumanity.
 Let virtue dictate, lest you blush hereafter,
 When 'tis too late ; it will be said, the heart
 Of a weak woman had more pow'rful influence
 Than fame or glory ; that this hero, long
 Renown'd in arms, had been a ruthless tyrant,
 Had he not lov'd —————

Andromache says to Pyrrhus:

Seigneur, que faites vous, & que dira la Grece ?
 Faut il qu'un si grand cœur montre tant de foiblesse,
 Et qu'un dessein si beau, si grand, si genereux
 Passe pour le transport d'un esprit amoureux ?
 Non, non, d'un ennemi respecter la misere,
 Sauver des malheureux, rendre un fils à sa mere,
 De cent peuples pour lui combattre la rigueur,
 Sans lui faire payer son salut de mon cœur,
 Malgré moi, si'l le faut, lui donner un azile ;
 Seigneur, voilà des soins dignes du fils d'Achille.

Consider, sir, how this will sound in Greece !
 How can so great a soul betray such weakness ?

Let

Let not men say so gen'rous a design
Was but the transport of a heart in love.

Come if PHILIP'S Distress'd Mother.

The resemblance, you see, runs through the whole, and the imitation is apparent; but I can tell you more, and what will astonish you: all the scenes of Orestes and Hermione, at least the foundation of them, are taken from Garibald and Enduige, two obscure characters in this obscure and wretched piece; such barbarous names alone would have been sufficient to damn the play, which Boileau visibly alludes to, where he says,

Qui de tant de heros va choisir Childebrand?

Amidst so many heroes, who would choose
A Childebrand?

But Garibald, all Garibald as he is, plays exactly the same part with Enduige as Orestes does with Hermione; Enduige loves Grimoald, as Hermione does Pyrrhus; she desires Garibal to revenge her of a traitor, who quits her for Rodelind; as Hermione requests Orestes to revenge her on Pyrrhus, who deserts her for Andromache.

Enduige says,

Pour gagner mon amour il faut servir ma haine.

To gain my love you must assist my hate.

Hermione

Hermione fays,

Vengez moi. Je crois tout.

Avenge my wrongs, and I believe them all.

Distress'd Mother.

Geribald.

Le pourrez vous, madame? & savez vous vos forces,
 Savez vous de l'amour quelles sont les amorces,
 Savez vous ce qu'il peut, & qu'un visage aimé
 Est toujours trop aimable à ce qu'il a charmé?
 Si vous nem'abusez, votre cœur vous abuse, &c.

And can you, madam! Know you your own heart?
 Know you the strong delusive pow'r of love?
 Know you the face she once admir'd is still
 Most beauteous in a doting woman's eye?
 If you deceive not me, you are deceiv'd
 By your own heart——

Orestes.

Et vous le haïssez? Avouez le, madame;
 L'amour n'est pas un feu qu'on enferme en une
 aime;
 Tout nous trahit; la voix, le silence, les yeux;
 Et les feux mal couverts n'en éclatent que mieux.

B You

You hate him then : alas ! the flames of love
 Are not so soon extinguish'd or conceal'd.
 Our looks, our words, nay ev'n our silence oft
 Betrays us ; and the fire that's smother'd o'er
 Breaks out afresh, and only burns the fiercer.

These ideas which the genius of Corneille
 threw out by chance, without improving on
 them, the taste of Racine gathered up, and
 formed into a complete work ; he picked out
 the gold *de stercore Enni*.

Corneille never consulted any friend,
 whilst Racine took the advice of Boileau ;
 and for this reason the former, from the pub-
 lication of *Heraclius*, always declined ; the
 latter rose every day into higher reputation.
 It is generally believed that Racine enervated
 and disgraced the stage by the love scenes
 which he perpetually brought upon it ; but
 truth obliges me to acknowledge, that Cor-
 neille, and before him Rotrou, were guilty
 of the same fault.

There is not one of their pieces which is
 not, partly at least, founded on this passion ;
 the only difference is, that they never treated
 it properly, never spoke to the heart, or
 made any impression on it. Their love was
 never affecting, except in those scenes of the
Cid, which are taken from the *Guillain of*
de Castro. Corneille introduced love even
 into the terrible subject of *Oedipus*, which

you

you may remember I was bold enough to attempt about seven and forty years ago. I have now by me a letter from Mr. Dacier in 1714, to whom I shewed my third act, imitated from Sophocles, wherein he advises me to restore the ancient chorus, and by no means to talk of love in a subject so ill adapted to it. I followed his advice, and read my piece to the comedians, who insisted on my withdrawing part of the chorus, and at least bringing in some remembrance of love in the part of Philoctetes; that his sentiments might make some amends, they said, for the insipidity of Oedipus and Jocasta.

Even the little part of the chorus which I retained was never spoken. Such was the horrid taste of those times. Some years after, Athaliah, that master-piece of dramatic writing, was exhibited; the nation might have learned from thence that the stage could subsist without that species of dialogue which so often degenerates into eclogues and idylls. But as Athaliah was supported by the pathos of religion, they imagined there was a necessity for love in all prophane subjects.

At length Merope and Orestes have opened the eyes of the public. I am satisfied the author of Electra must think as I do in this respect, and that he would never have introduced two love intrigues into the most sub-

lime and awful subject of antiquity, if he had not been obliged to it by the wretched custom established of disfiguring every thing by these fashionable puerilities: the ridicule of it was at last found out, and the custom exploded.

Strangers laughed at us for a long time, but we knew nothing of it; we imagined it was impossible for a woman to appear on the stage without saying I love, a hundred different ways, and in verses loaded with botching epithets. Nothing was heard but *flamme* and *ame*, *feux* and *veux*, *cœur* and *vainqueur*. But Corneille rose far above these trifles in his *Horace*, *Cinna*, *Pompey*, &c. all his pieces will furnish me with entertaining anecdotes, and interesting reflections. Do not be surprised if my commentaries should swell into as many volumes as your *Cicero*. Preval on the academy to continue its kind protection to me, and its instructions, and above all assist it with your own example. The booksellers of Geneva who have undertaken this edition by consent of the company, assure me that nothing was ever published at so low a price; it is necessary indeed that it should be so, that those whose fortune is not equal to their taste and knowledge,

* *Flame*, *soul*, *fires*, *vows*, *heart*, *conqueror*; these don't rhyme in English, and therefore could not be translated: if the author had written in our tongue he would have said, *fire*, *desire*, *arms*, *charms*, &c.

knowledge, may enjoy the benefit of it. It is intended to be made a present of to those who are not in a capacity to purchase it: works are generally given to the rich and great, though the contrary ought most certainly to take place, which is with regard to this edition, the intention of some of the most considerable persons in the nation, who make it a point to pay all possible honours to the great Corneille, almost a hundred years after his death, and in the worst of times.

Our literary history cannot furnish us with an example of any thing so extraordinary as what has happened in regard to this affair. Two persons whom I never had the honour of seeing, whom I never so much as wrote to or solicited, voluntarily undertook the task with that zeal and alacrity, without which it could not possibly have succeeded.

One of them is the dutchess of Gramont, who warmly patronised the scheme, prevailed on a considerable number of foreigners to subscribe to it, and who, in short, merely from generosity and greatness of soul, has done for Mr. Corneille, though an utter stranger to her, every thing which could have been expected from a most intimate friend and acquaintance. I assure you the finest pieces of the great Corneille himself never affected me more than this incident.

Our other benefactor, would you believe it? is the court Banker, Mr. Delaborde who, without any knowledge of me, or acquainting me with his intention, procured above a hundred subscriptions, which we never even heard of here till after it was done. Thus generously supported and encouraged, I took the liberty to address the king, our great protector, to permit his name to be placed at the head of the subscription: I flattered myself he would condescend to take fifty copies; he took two hundred. I applied for a dozen from his royal highness the infant duke of Parma, he subscribed for thirty. Almost all the princes of the blood gave us their names. The duke of Choiseul set himself down for twenty, the marchioness of Pompadour, to whom I had not so much as written, took fifty, her brother twelve. Amongst the members of our academy, the count Clermont, cardinal de Bernes, marshal Richelieu, and the duke of Nivernois distinguished themselves.

Mr. Watelet not only takes five copies, but is so good as to design and grave the frontispiece, assisting us both with his genius and his purse. But what will you say when I tell you that Mr. Bouret, whom I scarce know, has subscribed for four and twenty?

All this was done before any notice was given of printing it, and before it was known what

what would be the price of it. The company of farmers-general subscribed for sixty, and several other societies have followed their example. This noble emulation becomes general: scarce was the first report of this edition spread in Germany, before the elector palatine, and the dutchess of Saxegotha exerted themselves in favour of it. At London we have my lord Chesterfield, lord Middleton, Mr. Fox the secretary of state, the duke of Gordon, Mr. Crawford, and several others.

You see, my dear brother, how, whilst politics divide kingdoms, and fanaticism separates fellow-citizens, the belles lettres reunite them: what can reflect more honour and praise on the polite arts? As much as men despise and contemn those who disgrace literature by their infamous periodical abuse, and those also who persecute and oppress it, so much do they respect and honour Cornille in every part of Europe.

The booksellers of Geneva who have undertaken this edition, enter generously into the design of it. They are of a family who many years have been in the council; one of them is a member. They are in short men who think as they ought to think, and consult not their interest but their reputation. They will receive no money from any one till after the delivery of the first volume;

and give twelve or thirteen volumes in octavo, with three and thirty fine prints for two louis d'ors: a great deal must certainly be lost by this, it could not be done therefore by way of precaution to secure the sale of the copies; it was absolutely necessary, and without the benefactions of the king, and the generosity of those who assisted, the scheme, like many other projects, would have been first approved of, and then fallen to the ground.

I ask pardon for the length of my letter, but commentators never know when to leave off, and yet generally say very little to the purpose.

If you have a mind I should say good things, write to me, &c.

LETTER

LETTER II

Mr. VOLTAIRE's Answer to the Duke of BOUILLON, who had written him a Letter in Verse, on the Edition of CORNEILLE, published by him for the Benefit of the Niece of that great Man.

YOU are like the marquis de la Farre, my lord, who began to discover his genius for poetry at about your age, when some certain more valuable talents seemed to decline, and to acquaint him that there were other pleasures reserved for him. His first verses were dedicated to love; his second to the abbé Chaulien. Your first fruits were offered to me. This, my lord, was not altogether just; but I am the more obliged to you for it. You tell me, I have always triumphed over my enemies; to you I am indebted for my greatest triumph.

'Midst barren rocks the heedless poet plays,
Whilst Corneille's daughter listens to his lays,
Nor shall regret thy banks, delightful Seine,
Whilst he is prais'd and sung by great Turenne.

There ever is a kind retreat for me,
 Or with Bellona, or Melpomene;
 Favour'd by these, and such as these alone,
 I laugh at folly, malice, and Freron.
 'Tis double joy, and makes our bliss complete,
 To see pale envy prostrate at our feet,
 To brave the ravenous harpies, thus releas'd
 From danger, gives new relish to the feast;
 And clam'rous * Berthier's calumnies to me,
 At distance heard, are pleasant harmony.

How sweet it is, whilst in my Chloe's arms
 Content I sit, enraptur'd with her charms,
 To write, inspir'd by my superior state,
 A satire on my wretched rival's fate,
 To make the whining fool in all submit,
 And envy both the lover and the wit.
 But this, you'll say, is not a Christian's part,
 To rail and persecute: with all my heart;
 I grant, my lord, the powerful plea; but then
 You'll own with me that Christians are but men:
 The world's a state of warfare, and we know,
 In ev'ry place hath ev'ry man a foe.
 'Midst mortals here eternal quarrels rise;
 Nay, we have heard of battles in the skies.

The
 * The French edition of these letters informs us,
 in a note, that this Berthier was formerly a Jesuit;
 the professed enemy of genius and literature; a kind
 of spy, employed by some devotees of the court, from
 whom he received pensions.

The court, the army, and the church have fought
For wealth, for pow'r, for something, and for
nought ;

Ev'n fair Parnassus, to Parnassus' shame,
Hath fought with ardour for an empty name.

We sit above, my friend, who better know,
And laugh at all the little crowd below.

Laughters as we are, my lord, we may still
be doing good. Your lordship I am sure will
to Mrs. Corneille. You have desired me to
tax you for as many copies as I please. If I
consulted your heart only, I should rate you
like the king, and put you down for two hun-
dred; but as I know you are perpetually
scattering your money abroad in every place,
till sometimes you are left without a shilling,
I shall reduce you to six, and increase the
number as soon as I find you are turned oeco-
nomist.

I beseech your highness to preserve your
regard for your poor Swiss,

VOLTAIRE

LETTER

LETTER III.

To the Duke of VALIERE, Grand
Falconer.

YOU resemble, my lord, the heroes of ancient chivalry, by thus exposing your own person in defence of your faithful followers, when in danger; but the little error which you led me into has been the means of displaying your profound erudition. Few grand falconers would have delivered the *Sermones Festivi*, printed in 1502. Raillery apart, to put yourself in the breach for me, was an action worthy of your noble heart.

You told me, in your first letter, that Urceus Codrus was a great preacher; your second informs me he was a great libertine, but no cordelier. You ask pardon of St. Francis and all the seraphic order, for the contempt into which I am fallen. I join with you, and put on my penitentials; but it still remains true, that the mysteries represented at the Hotel de Bourgogne were more decent than most of our modern sermons. Place who we please in the room of Urceus Codrus, and we shall yet be in the right.

There

LETTER

There is not a word in the mysteries offensive to piety and good manners. Forty people would never agree to write and act sacred poems in French, that should disgust the public by their indecency, and of course oblige them to shut up their doors. But an ignorant preacher, who works by himself, and is accountable to none for what he does, who has no idea of decorum, may very probably advance some ridiculous things in his sermon, especially when he delivers it in Latin. Such, for instance, are the discourses of the cordelier Maillard, which you undoubtedly have in your large and valuable collection; in his sermon on the Thursday in the second week of Lent, he addresses himself thus to the lawyers wives that wore gowns embroidered with gold.

“ You say you are cloathed according to rank; go to the devil, ladies, you and your rank together. You will tell me, perhaps, our husbands don’t give us these fine gowns; we earn them by the industry of our own sweet bodies: thirty thousand devils take your industry, and your bodies too.”

“ I will not put you to the blush, by quoting any more passages from brother Maillard; but if you will take the trouble to look into him, you will find some strokes worthy of Ureus Codrus. Brother Andrew and Me-

not

not were likewise famous for their filthiness. The Pulpit was not indeed always polluted by obscenity; but for a long time sermons were little better than the mysteries of the Hotel de Bourgogne.

It must be acknowledged, that the members of what they call the reformed church in France, were the first that brought reasoning and argument into their discourses. When we want to change the ideas, and alter the principles of men, we must make use of reason; but this was still very far from eloquence. The pulpit, the bar, the stage, philosophy, literature, theology, every thing we could boast of in those times, some few particulars excepted, were beneath the common pieces exhibited at a country fair.

True taste was not established amongst us till the reign of Lewis XIV. It was this which long since determined me to attempt a slight sketch of that glorious æra; and you must have observed, in that history, the age is my hero more than Lewis himself, what respect and gratitude soever may be due to his memory.

It is true indeed, that, in general, our neighbours made no greater figures than ourselves. How happened it that men could preach for ever, and yet preach so badly!

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and that the Italians, who had so long before shook off their barbarity in other respects, with regard to the pulpit were but so many harlequins with surplices on! Whilst at the same time the Jerusalem of Tasso rival'd the Iliad, and Orlando Furioso surpass'd the Odyssey; Pastor Fido had no model in all antiquity, and Raphael and Paul Veronese actually performed what was only imagined of Zeuxis and Apelles.

You must certainly, my lord, have read the council of Trent. There is not a peer in the kingdom, I suppose, who does not peruse some part of it every morning. You remember the sermon at the opening of the council by the bishop of Bitonto.

He proves, first, that the council is necessary, because several councils have deposed kings and emperors. Secondly, because, in the Æneid, Jupiter assembles a council of the gods. Thirdly, because, at the creation of man, and the building of Babel, God attended to it in the manner of a council. He insists on it, a little after, that the council should reduce themselves to thirty, like the heroes in the Trojan horse. And, finally, asserts, that the gate of Paradise and the gate of the council was the same thing. That living water flowed from it, with which the holy fathers should sprinkle their hearts, which were as dry lands; or, in lieu
of

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of

of this, that the Holy Ghost would open their mouths like the mouths of Balaam and Caiphas.

This, my lord, was preached before all the general states of Christendom. The sermon of St. Antony of Padua to the fish is still more famous in Italy than that of the bishop of Bitonto; we may excuse, therefore, our brother Andrew, brother Garasse, and all the Giles's of our pulpits in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, as they were but on a level with our masters the Italians. What could be the cause of this gross ignorance, so universally spread over Italy in the time of Tasso; over France in the days of Montagne, Charron, and the chancellor de l'Hospital; and over England in the age of Bacon? How happened it that these men of genius did not reform the times they lived in? We must attribute it to the colleges where youth were educated; to that monkish theologic spirit which finished the barbarism that the colleges had introduced. A genius, as Tasso was, read Virgil, and produced the Jerusalem. A merchant read Terence, and wrote Mandragora; but what monk or curate, at that time of day, read Tully or Demosthenes? A poor and wretched scholar, grown half an idiot by being obliged, for four years together, to get John Despauiere by heart; and half a madman by supporting

a thesis

a thesis *de rebus & partibus*, on thoughts and categories, received his cap, and his letters of recommendation, and away he went to preach to an audience, three parts of whom were greater fools, and worse educated than himself.

The people listened to these theological farces with outstretched necks, fixed eyes, and open mouths, as children do to stories of witches and apparitions, and returned home perfect penitents. The same spirit that made them give ear to the nonsense of a foolish mother, led them to these sermons; which they attended the more diligently, as it cost them nothing. It was not till the time of Coeffeteau and Balzac that some preachers began to talk rationally; though at the same time they were very tiresome. Bourdaloue, in short, was the first man of any eloquence in the pulpit. Of this, Burnet, bishop of Salisbury, bears testimony, in his Memoirs; where he tells us, that, in travelling through France, he was astonished at his sermons; and that Bourdaloue reformed the preachers of England, as well as those of France.

Bourdaloue might be stiled almost the Corneille of the pulpit, as Maffillon became afterwards the Racine of it. Not that I mean to compare an art, half profane, to a ministry well-nigh holy; nor, on the other hand, the little difficulty of making a good sermon

sermon to the great and inexpressible one of composing a good tragedy. I only say, that Bourdaloue carried the art of reasoning as far in preaching as Corneille did in the drama; and that Massillon studied to be as elegant in prose, as Racine was in verse. True indeed it is, that Bourdaloue was reproached, as well as Corneille, for being too much of a lawyer, for preferring argument to passion, and sometimes producing but indifferent proofs. Massillon, on the other hand, chose rather to paint, than to affect; he imitated Racine as much as it was possible to do it in prose; not forgetting, at the same time, boldly to assert, that all dramatic authors would be damned. Every quack, you know, must cry up his own nostrum, and condemn those of others. His stile is pure; his descriptions moving and pathetic. Read over this passage on the humanity of the great.

“ Alas! if any of us have an excuse for
 “ being morose, whimsical, and melancholy,
 “ a burthen to ourselves and all about us, it
 “ must be those miserable wretches, whom
 “ misfortunes, calamities, home-felt necessities,
 “ and gloomy cares perpetually surround. They might be forgiven, if with
 “ mourning, bitterness, and despair already
 “ in their hearts, the marks of it should
 “ sometimes appear in their external behaviour.”

“haviour. But shall the great and happy
 “of this world, whom joy and pleasure ac-
 “company, whilst every thing smiles around
 “them; shall these pretend to derive, even
 “from their felicity, an excuse for their
 “churlishness and caprice? Shall they be
 “melancholy, disquieted, and unsociable,
 “because they are more happy? Shall they
 “look upon it as the privilege of prospe-
 “rity to oppress with the weight of their
 “ill humour the poor and unfortunate, who
 “already groan beneath the yoke of their
 “power and authority?”

Recollect, at the same time, these lines in
 Britannicus:

Tout ce que vous voyez conspire à vos desirs
 Vos jours toujours serins coulent dans les plaisirs
 L'empire en est pour vous l'inépuisable source,
 Ou si quelque chagrin en interrompt la course,
 Tout l'univers, soignant de les entretenir
 S'empresse à l'effacer de votre souvenir.
 Britannicus est seul, quelque' ennui qui le presse,
 Il ne voit dans son sort que moi qui l'intéresse,
 Et n'a pour tous plaisirs, seigneur, que quelques
 pleurs

Qui lui font quelquefois oublier ses malheurs.

Whate'er thou seest conspires to make thee happy,
 Serene thy days in endless pleasures flow
 From the wide empire's unexhausted spring;

Or

Or if intruding sorrow, for a while,
 Breaks in upon thy joys, the world itself,
 Still anxious for thy good, with ardour strives
 To blot out every painful sad idea,
 And give thee peace again. — Britannicus,
 Meantime, is left alone ; when cares oppress,
 I, only I, participate his griefs,
 And all his comfort is the tears I shed,
 Which sometimes makes the wretch forget his sor-
 rows.

In comparing these two passages together,
 I perceive the scholar, as it were, contending
 with his master. I could shew you twenty
 more examples of the same nature, but that
 I am afraid of being tedious.

Massillon and Cheminais knew Racine by
 heart, and disguised the verses of that divine
 poet in their pious prose. In the same man-
 ner several preachers learned the art of de-
 clamation from Baron, and corrected the
 gesture of the comedian by that of the sacred
 orator. Nothing can be a stronger proof
 than this, that the arts at least are brothers,
 though the artists themselves are far from
 being so.

The worst of sermons is, that they are on-
 ly so many declamations pro and con. The
 same man who affirmed last Sunday that
 there was no felicity in grandeur, that
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crowns are thorns, that courts are full of nothing but illustrious wretches, and that joy is spread over the faces of the poor, will tell you, the Sunday after, that the lower part of mankind is condemned to misery and sorrow; and that the rich and great must one day pay for their dangerous prosperity.

They will inform you, in Advent, that God is perpetually employed in removing all the wants and necessities of mankind; and, when Lent comes, assure you, that the earth is barren and accursed. These common places, with a few flourishing phrases, carry them on from one end of the year to the other.

The preachers in England follow another method, which would not suit us at all. The deepest book of * metaphysics which they have is Clarke's sermons: one would imagine he had preached only to philosophers, who perhaps too, at the end of every period, might have required of him a long explanation; and the *Frenchman at London, to whom nothing could be proved*, would soon have left the preacher there. His discourses,

* Clarke's sermons are by no means, as Mr. Voltaire here asserts, all metaphysical: those indeed on the being of a God, &c. are certainly so; but there are withal as many excellent, plain, practical discourses in this collection, as in any of our best writers.

courses, however, make an excellent book, which very few understand. What a difference there is between ages and nations! and how far off are brother Garasse and brother Andrew from Massillon and Clarke!

From my study of history I have at least learned, that the times we live in are certainly of all times the most enlightened, in spite of our bad books, as they are also the most happy, in spite of some casual misfortunes: for what man of letters can be ignorant that good taste was brought into France about the time of Cinna, and the *Provincial Letters*! or where is he, who has any knowledge of history, that can point out a period of time, from the days of Clovis, more happy than what has passed since the *Æra* when Louis XIV. began to reign by himself, down to the present moment? I defy the most malevolent to tell me what age he would prefer to our own.

We must do justice; we must acknowledge that, at present, a geometrician of four-and-twenty knows more than ever Descartes did; and that a country vicar preaches more sensibly than the grand almoner of Louis XII. The nation is better instructed, our stile in general is much improved, and consequently the minds of men greatly superior now to what they were formerly.

You

You will say, perhaps, that our age is at present on the decline, and that we have not so much genius and abilities amongst us as we had in the glorious days of Louis XIV. Genius, I grant you, decays; but knowledge is increased. A thousand painters, in the time of Salvator Rosa, were not worth a Raphael, or a Michael Angelo; but the thousand painters formed by Raphael and Michael Angelo composed a school infinitely superior to that which those two great men found established. We have not, indeed, at the close of our fine age, a Massillon, or a Bourdaloue, a Bossuet, or a Fenelon; but the poorest of our present preachers is a Demosthenes, in comparison with all those who preached from the times of St. Remi to those of brother Garasse.

There is more difference between the worst of our modern tragedies and the pieces of Jodelle, than between the *Athalie* of Racine and the *Maccabees* of La Motte, or the *Moses* of the abbé Nadal. Upon the whole, in the productions of the mind our artists fall short of those who flourished in the dawn and meridian of our golden age; but the nation itself is improved. We are over-run indeed with trifles, and mine are always adding to the number: these are but so many insects, which denote the abundance of fruits and flowers; you see none of them in a barren soil. You will observe, that in
these

these little pieces that are perpetually coming out, destroyed one by another, and all of them, in a few days, condemn'd to eternal oblivion, there is often more taste and delicacy than you will find in all the books written before the *Provincial Letters*. Such is our affluence in wit, when compared to the poverty of twelve hundred years past.

If you examine into the present state of our manners, laws, government, and society, you will find my accompt strictly just. I date from the moment Lewis XIV. took the reins into his own hand, and would ask the most exasperated critic, the gravest pangenyrift of times past, whether he durst compare the present period with that when the archbishop of Paris went to parliament with a poignard in his pocket? Or would he prefer the preceding age, when the first minister was shot, and his wife condemned to be burned for a witch? Ten or twelve years of the great Henry IV. appear happy, after forty of abominations and horrors, that make one's hair stand an end; but whilst the best of princes was employed in healing our wounds, they bled on every side. The poison of the league infected every mind; families were divided; the manners of men harsh and disagreeable. Fanaticism reigned universally, except at the court. Commerce, indeed, began to increase; but was not, as yet, attended with any great advantages.

tages. Society had no charms, our cities no police; all the comforts, in short, and conveniences of life were still wanting. Figure to yourself, at the same time, a hundred thousand assassinations committed in the name of God. Amidst the ruins of cities laid in ashes, even to the time of Francis I. you will see Italy stained with our blood, a king prisoner at Madrid, and the enemy in the midst of our provinces.

The name of *Pater Patriæ* was given to Lewis XII. but this father had some very unfortunate children, and was so himself: driven out of Italy, duped by the pope, conquered by Henry VIII. and obliged to bribe him to marry his sister. He was a good king, over a poor uncultivated people, without arts or manufacture; the houses of his capital built with lath and plaister, and most of them covered with thatch. Who would not rather wish to live under a good king, over a people opulent and wise, though dogmatical and mischievous?

The further you go back into former ages, the more savage you will find them; which renders our history so disgustful, that we have been forced to make chronological abridgments in columns, where every thing necessary is inserted, and only that which is useless omitted, for the sake of those curious readers who are desirous of knowing in what

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year

year the Sorbonne was founded, and are in doubt whether the equestrian statue in the Gothic cathedral at Paris is of Philip of Valois or Philip the Fair.

To say the truth, we have not really and properly existed above six score years. Laws, police, military discipline, trade, navigation, the fine arts, magnificence, taste, and genius, all began in the time of Lewis XIV. Some of them are ripening to perfection in our own age, which I meant to insinuate, when I advanced, that every thing heretofore was rude and barbarous, and the pulpit amongst them. Urceus Codrus most certainly was not worth talking so long about; but he has furnished me with reflections which may not perhaps be intirely usefess; we should endeavour to draw some advantage from every thing.

LETTER

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LETTER IV.

To my Lord LYTTLETON, at
London.

I HAVE read the ingenious Dialogues of the Dead, lately published by your lordship, where I find myself spoken of as a banished man, and guilty of many excesses in my writings. I am obliged, perhaps, for the honour of my country, publicly to declare, that I never was banished, because I never committed those crimes which the author of the Dialogues has thought fit to lay to my charge.

No man ever exerted himself more strenuously than myself in favour of the rights of humanity, and yet never have I gone beyond the bounds of that virtue. I am not established in Swisserland, as this author, who has been misinformed, ventures to assert. I live on my own estate in France. Retirement is fit for old men, who have lived long enough in courts to detest and avoid them, and who enjoys new life in a peaceable retreat, with a few sensible and faithful friends. I have indeed a little country house near Geneva; but my residence

and seat are in Burgundy. The king's goodness to me, all the privileges belonging to my estate, and the exemption of it from all taxes, has moreover firmly attached me to his person. If I had been banished, I could not have procured passports from our court for several of the English nobility. The service which I did them gives me a claim to that justice which I expect from the author of the Dialogues.

With regard to religion, I think, and I believe he thinks so too, that God is neither Presbyterian nor Lutheran, high or low church, but the father of all mankind, of lord Lyttleton, and of

VOLTAIRE.

From the castle of Ferney,
in Burgundy.

LETTER

LETTER V.

To the Abbé TRUBLET, who had sent him his discourse on his being admitted a Member of the French Academy.

Chateau de Ferney, 27 April, 1761.

YOUR letter, Sir, together with your generous manner of acting, prove that you are not my enemy; though, by your book, I should have suspected you of being so. I had much rather give credit to your letter than to your book. You have said in print, that I made you yawn; and I have said in print, that I laughed at it. It only follows from hence, that you are not easily diverted, and that I am a bad joker. Upon the whole, both in yawning and in laughing you keep me company! and we must forget every thing like good Christians, and good Academicians.

I like your discourse extremely well, and am obliged to you for sending it me; as to your letter,

Nardi parvus Onyx

Eliciet cadum.

C 3

I beg

I beg pardon for quoting Horace, which your heroes Fontenelle and la Motte never did; and must tell you, that I was not born with more malice in my heart than yourself, and am at the bottom an honest fellow. It is true indeed, that having, some years ago, taken it into my head that one got nothing by being so, I grew a little gay, because they said it would be good for my health. Besides that I did not think myself so considerable and important as always to disdain certain illustrious enemies, who attacked me personally for the space of forty years, and who one after another seemed resolved on my destruction, and persecuted me with as much zeal as if I had contended with them for a bishopric, or the place of a farmer-general. I fell upon them, at last, out of pure modesty, and actually believed myself upon a level with them; as Tully says,

In arenam cum aequalibus descendi.

Believe me, Sir, I make a great difference between you and them; but I well remember, when I was at Paris, both my rivals and myself were people of very little consequence; poor scholars of the age of Lewis XIV. some in verse, some in prose, some half one and half the other (of which number I had the honour to be one) indefatigable writers of very middling performances,
great

great composers of trifles, weighing most gravely the eggs of flies in scales of spiders webs. I saw scarce any thing but a little quackery, and am perfectly convinced of the nothingness of my own writings; but as I equally perceive the nothingness of all the rest, I imitate the *Vejanius* of *Horace*,

Vejanius, armis

Herculis ad postem fixis, latet abditus ager.

It is from this retreat, I now assure you with the greatest sincerity, that I find a great many useful and agreeable things in what you have wrote: that I most cordially forgive the pinches I have received from you, and am sorry for the little scratches which I have given you: that your manner of proceeding has for ever disarmed my resentment; that good-nature is better than raillery: and that I am, my dear brother, with the truest esteem, and without a compliment, as if nothing had happened between us, with all my heart, yours, &c.

LETTER VI.

EPISTLE to SOPHIA.

IN Rome of old, as ancient poets sing,
 And I believe, dame Flora was the thing;
 Dictators, heroes, consuls, all the crowd
 Of Glory's fav'rites at her altars bow'd;
 The rich, the poor, the giddy, and the grave,
 Or prince, or peasant, proud to be her slave:
 With Cupids then the Roman eagles play'd,
 And sported with her in the classic shade;
 Crown'd by the gen'ral voice the queen of flow'rs,
 In festive mirth she led the jocund hours;
 For many an age she kept th' imperial seat,
 And saw the world's proud conqu'rors at her feet.
 At length her reign is o'er, the time is come,
 When Paris in her queen shall rival Rome.
 At length to thee, Sophia, nymph divine,
 Her crown the vanquish'd Flora shall resign;
 The joyful news to ev'ry zephyr known,
 They welcome their new Flora to the throne.
 In crowds the willing slaves obsequious stand,
 And waft their spicy odours thro' the land.
 The lover's month, sweet rosy-finger'd May,
 Shall hail with dimpled smiles th' auspicious day;

Whilst

Whilst fair Vertumnus, leader of the year,
 The God of spring, shall in her train appear.
 Fear first made gods, a truth to heathens known;
 But goddesses are made by love alone.

But goddess, is a title still too mean
 For sweet Sophia, pleasure's honour'd queen,
 My lovely fair one, youthful, gay, and free,
 Shall ne'er assume this false divinity,
 But leave to city dames such proud idolatry.
 To her thy temple, harmony, is giv'n,
 A nobler palace, and a fairer heav'n,
 Whether in Psyche's form, whilst light'nings play,
 And thunders roar, she joins the plaintive lay;
 Or whilst the real flame her hearers prove,
 Points the keen pangs of disappointed love.
 Say, sweet enchantress, by what pow'r unknown,
 Can'st thou with matchless skill unite in one
 The wit of smart Thalia's flippant tongue,
 And Polyhymnia's elegance of song?
 O how I love thee when thy sportive vein,
 Ev'n whilst it mocks, diverts the lover's pain!
 Whilst, pleasure's little priestess as thou art,
 Thy lively sallies captivate the heart.
 Never in thy delightful train is seen
 'The surly pedant, with affected mien
 And solemn face, impenetrably dull,
 Nor the proud mincing fashionable fool;
 Nor in the weaker sex wilt thou permit
 Imposing airs to pass for sterling wit;

Nor lov'st thou those proud dames, who think it
brave

To treat alike the lover and the slave.

Nature we find with thee, or that alone

Which rivals her, the art of fair Ninon;

That art which he who sees through still believes,

Which without fraud agreeably deceives;

With thee we trifle, sport, and laugh, and play;

With thee we chat the chearful hours away.

Constraint, the bane of blifs, is never seen

To enter there, nor hyp, nor sickly spleen.

There, free from noise and tumult, is the seat

Of private happiness, the dear retreat

Of gentle peace and soft security,

Where by the public's persecuting eye

No longer seen, beneath the tented shade,

Around us all the loves and graces play'd,

Whilst to the more than gods, of lib'ral soul,

Our beauteous Hebe pour'd the nectar'd bowl.

There lounging liberty, her elbows plac'd

On the free table, in her arms embrac'd

Two nymphs divine, which ev'ry blifs improve,

Sweet-smiling pleasure, and all-healing love.

What are thy titles, glory! what, O fame!

Are all thy honours but an empty name!

This sweet delirium, this enchanting hour

In life's short day, is more than wealth or pow'r.

Live then, Sophia, easy, free, and gay,

Nor cast thy dear-lov'd liberty away.

Henceforth,

Henceforth, my charmer, take the wiser part,
 Let all partake, but none enslave thy heart.
 Thy love wou'd fix one happier than the rest ;
 But thy indiff'rence makes a thousand blest.

LETTER

LETTER VII.

To Mr. PALISSOT, Author of a Comedy
called the PHILOSOPHERS.

I RETURN you thanks, Sir, both for your letter and for your performance. Be so kind as to prepare yourself for a long answer: old men love to prate a little. In the first place I must tell you, I think your piece is extremely well written. The philosopher Crispinus, walking on all fours, must have raised a good laugh, and I make no doubt but my friend * John James will be the first to join in it. It is an innocent jest, and has no malice in it. Besides that the citizen of Geneva, being certainly guilty of *læsa comedia*, it was natural for comedy to return the compliment.

It is a very different thing with the citizens of Paris, whom you have brought on the stage; that is to be sure not a laughing matter. I can easily conceive that one should endeavour to ridicule those who would ridicule us. Self-defence is always justifiable;
and

* The celebrated Jean Jaques Rousseau, of Geneva.

and I know, with regard to myself, if I was not so old, I would have a scuffle with Mess. Freron and de Pompignan, the former for vilifying and abusing me five or six years together, as I am told by those who read such trash; the latter for having pointed me out before the whole academy as an old dotard, who has stuffed his history with false anecdotes. I was strongly tempted to mortify him by a full justification, and convince him, that the story of the iron mask, the testament of Charles II. of Spain, and several others of the same kind, are absolutely true; and that when I mean to be serious, I have done with poetical fictions.

I have the vanity to think myself worthy of a place amidst the crowd of Philosophers, who are always conspiring against the state, and who most certainly are the cause of all the misfortunes that happen to us by sea and land. For, to confess the truth, I was the first who wrote in France in favour of attraction, against the great vortices of Descartes, and the little ones of Malebranche. I defy the most ignorant wretch, even Freron himself, to prove that I have ever falsified the Newtonian system. The society at London approve my little catechism of attraction; most undoubtedly, therefore, I must be deemed guilty of philosophy.

If

If I had vanity, I should think myself still more criminal, according to the report of a certain large book, intituled, *The Oracle of Philosophers*, which has reached even as far as my retreat. This oracle, may it please you, is no other than myself. I should have burst with vain-glory, but unhappily my vanity was taken down, when I found that the author of this same oracle had pretended frequently to have seen and dined with me, at a seat near Lausanne, which I never set eyes on. He tells you, that I received him very well, and, in return for this kind reception, he acquaints the public with all the secrets I had intrusted him with.

I told him, it seems, that I had been with the king of Prussia, on purpose to establish the Chinese religion there. Thus you see I am become at once one of the sect of Confucius, and have therefore a right to resent all affronts put upon philosophers. I acknowledged, at the same time, to this author, that the king of Prussia had discarded me; a circumstance very possible, but very false, and concerning which this gentleman has told a downright lye.

I assured him likewise, it seems, that I had no attachment to France, at a time when the king is perpetually heaping favours on me, continues to me the place of his gentleman in ordinary, and obliges me by annexing

nexing the most valuable privileges to my estate. All this I frankly acknowledged to this worthy person, only that I might be ranked amongst the philosophers.

I have moreover dipped into the infernal cabal of the Encyclopædia. There are at least a dozen articles of mine published in the three first volumes, and had prepared for the succeeding part a dozen more, which would have overturned all the orders in the state.

I am withal one of the first who made use of that vile word *humanity*, against which you have made so brave an attack in your pretended comedy; after this, to refuse me the name of a philosopher, would certainly be the most crying injustice.

So much for myself. As to the persons whom you have attacked in this work, if they have injured you, you have certainly a right to retaliate. It has always been deemed lawful in society to turn into ridicule those who have at any time done us the same little favour. I remember, when I lived in the world, I was scarce ever present at an entertainment, where some laughter did not exercise his raillery on one of the company; who, in his turn, endeavoured to raise the laugh against his competitor. Lawyers do the same at the bar; and all the writers

writers I know ridicule one another as much as they possibly can. Boileau laughed at Fontenelle, and Fontenelle at Boileau. The first Rousseau made a jest of Zara and Alzira, and I did the same by his latter epistles; acknowledging at the same time, that his ode on Conquerors was excellent, and most of his epigrams very clever; for above all things we must remember to be just.

Examine your conscience, and see if you are so in representing D'Alembert, Diderot, Helvetius, Jaucourt, and the rest of them as so many scoundrels and pick-pockets. Again I say, if they laughed at you in their books, you have a right to laugh at them again; but, by heaven, your raillery is too strong; if they really were such as you have made them, they ought to be sent to the galleys, which is by no means a comic scene. To speak plainly to you, those whom you endeavour to reflect on are known to be some of the best men in the world; and I am not certain whether their honour and integrity are not even superior to their philosophy.

I frankly avow to you I do not know a more respectable character than Helvetius, who has given up two hundred and fifty thousand livres a year for the advantage of cultivating the Belles-Lettres in peace and quiet. If he has, perhaps, in a large volume,

full

full of new and sublime things, advanced, by chance, half a dozen rash and ill-sounding propositions, he has already sufficiently repented of them, without having his wounds torn open by you on a public stage. †

Mr. Duclos, secretary to the first academy in the kingdom, had certainly a title to more regard than you have shewn him. His book on Manners is by no means a bad one. It is the performance of an honest man, who paints strongly what he has himself seen and well observed. In a word, have these gentlemen publicly offended you? It does not appear to me that they have. Why then calumniate them so outrageously?

I am a stranger to Mr. Diderot, nor did I ever see him; I only know he has been unfortunate, and unjustly persecuted by some ignorant and cruel tyrants. This consideration alone should have made you drop the pen. I regard withal the design of the Encyclopædia, as one of the finest monuments we could raise to the arts and sciences. There are in it some excellent articles, not only by D'Alembert, Diderot, and Jaucourt, but by several others, who, without any motive of profit or ambition, took a pleasure in contributing towards that immortal work. There are indeed some parts of it thoroughly contemptible, and mine perhaps may be of

of the number; but there is so much more of the good than of the bad, that all Europe desires a continuation of the Encyclopædia. The first volumes have already been translated into several languages. Why then expose and ridicule on the stage, a work become necessary to the instruction of mankind, and the glory of our nation?

I must own to you I am astonished at what you tell me concerning Mr. Diderot. He has published, you assure me, two libels against two ladies of the first rank, who patronize you. You saw his name to them in his own hand-writing. If it be really so, I have no more to say. I descend from the clouds, renounce philosophy, and philosophers, bid adieu to books, and shall think of nothing for the future but my plough and seed-bag. But you will give me leave to ask you, which I may with justice demand, some certain proof of this. Permit me to write to these ladies friends; I should be glad to know for certain whether I must absolutely burn my library. But if Mr. Diderot was really wicked enough to abuse two respectable ladies, and what is more, two fine women, did they order you to revenge their cause? And the other characters whom you bring upon the stage, have they been so rude as to affront these ladies also?

Though

Though I never saw Mr. Diderot, I have always had the greatest respect for his profound knowledge. Not that I find any thing very pleasant in his *Father of a Family*; yet, prefixed to this piece, there is an epistle to the princess of Nassau, which appeared to me as the master-piece of eloquence, and the triumph of humanity. Forgive me the expression. Twenty people of the best characters have assured me, he has a good and noble heart. I should be sorry to be undeceived, though I would gladly know the truth.

Such is the weakness of our nature, most we wish to learn, what we most dread to know. I have given you my opinion with the utmost freedom. If you find in the bottom of your own heart that I am right, observe what you have to do. If I am in the wrong, tell me so; make me acknowledge it, and correct me. I aver to you I have no connections with any persons concerned in the *Encyclopædia*, except perhaps Mr. D'Alembert, who writes me a Lacedæmonian letter once in three months. I have indeed for him the greatest regard, and sincerely hope he never was wanting in respect to your noble patronesses. Once more I beg your permission to consult Mr. ——— about this whole affair.

I have

I have the honour, Sir, to be, with the truest esteem of your abilities, and the strongest desire of that peace which * Mess. Freron, Pompignan, and some other bad writers would fain deprive me of. Your most obedient, &c. &c.

* The French editor of these letters tells us, in a note on this passage, that Palissot was remarkable for abusing and calumniating his best friends and benefactors: that Mr. Helvetius, when he was, in great distress seven years ago, lent him a hundred louis d'ors: that he made songs upon Freron and his Wife, who supported him for four years: and that, in return for their good offices, he made the following madrigal, which has some archness in it, and which therefore I shall give the reader in the original, together with a translation of it:

I.

Freron à l'an littéraire
Met son nom & fait fort bien,
Car il paye ce qu'il fait faire;
Mais des enfans d'un tel pere,
Si chacun reprenoit le sien,
Monsieur Freron n'auroit plus rien.

II.

C'est dont à tort qu'on le blame
D'être mordant comme un chien,
Il peut faire une epigramme;
Mais, demandez le à sa femme,
Si chacun reprenoit le sien,
Monsieur Freron n'auroit plus rien.

III. II.

III.

Il est logé comme un prince,
Mais il doit, je ne sçai combien,
J'ai bien peur qu'on ne le pince.
Car son credit est si mince,
Que si chacun reprend le sien,
Monsieur Freron n'aura plus rien.

IV.

Aussi malgré l'étalage
De ses talens & de son bien,
Et de son noble compérage
Tant enfans, meubles, qu'ouvrages,
Quand chacun reprendra le sien,
Monsieur Freron n'aura plus rien.

I.

Freron, a candidate for fame,
To his *review* has put his name;
And well he might, for he, you'll say,
May those who do it for him pay,
The children for their father writ;
But from this mingled mass of wit,
Were ev'ry one to take his own,
What would be left for poor Freron?

II.

'Tis wrong to tax him with ill-nature,
Freron's a poor but harmless creature;
Tho', to preserve a poet's name,
He boasts of many an epigram;
Yet should you ask the poet's wife,
She would confess, I'll lay my life,
Were ev'ry one to take his own,
Few would be left for poor Freron.

III. Lodg'd

III.

Lodg'd like a monarch, he forgets,
Like other kings, to pay his debts;
His creditors, a numerous train,
Who threaten hard, his pockets drain,
And scarce the needy bard, I fear,
Can hold it out another year;
Were ev'ry one to take his own,
What would be left for poor Freron?

IV.

Spite of this pompous long parade
Of genius, and of fortune made,
His wealth, his family, and birth,
His wit, his humour, and his worth,
With all the offspring you can find,
Or of his body, or his mind,
Were ev'ry one to take his own,
What would be left for poor Freron?

LETTER

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LETTER VIII.

To Mr. PALISSOT.

S I R, Chateau de Ferney, 28 June, 1760.

I AM very angry with you. My resolution was to laugh at every thing in my peaceable retreat; but you have made me melancholy. You load me with praises, compliments, and friendship. I blush like an Agnes, when you tell the world that I am superior to all those whom you have attacked.

I believe I can write better verses than them, and perhaps know as much of history as they do; but, by my God, and upon my soul, (as the English say) old as I am, I am but a school-boy to them in every other respect. But proceed we to something of more consequence.

A friend of mine, of irreproachable character, and worthy of all attention, has assured me, and indeed proved in his last letter, that Mr. Diderot is not guilty of the facts which you lay to his charge. Another person,

son, no less respectable, has sent me a long detail of that whole affair, from whence it plainly appears, that Diderot had no concern in those infamous letters imputed to him. I have never seen, nor know any thing of him, any more than that he is engaged with the worthy and learned D'Alembert in a work which I read every day with fresh pleasure; a work, besides, of no less than six hundred thousand crowns value in a library, which has already been translated into three or four languages, and yet

Questa rabbia

Questa rabbia della gelosia

was quickly armed against a work, which would have been an honour to our nation, and towards which above fifty persons of the first distinction were eager to contribute; but one Abraham Chaumeix took it into his head to write a paper against the Encyclopædia, where he makes the authors say what they never meant to say, and even argues against what they may say hereafter. He misquotes the fathers of the church, as well as the authors of the dictionary. Abraham Chaumiex notwithstanding is believed, the licence withdrawn from the booksellers, and process issued out against the authors, and I, amongst others, am pointed out in the indictment, penned by the eloquent and sublime Robin, that great benefactor to, and glory of

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of his age; the eagle of magistrates, and the phoenix of France. Whilst things are in this disagreeable situation you write a comedy against the philosophers, and wound them when they are *sub gladio*. The part, no doubt, of a Christian full of humanity and charity.

You tell me, in excuse, that Moliere laughed at Cotin and Menage. It may be so; but he never asserted that Cotin and Menage advanced immoral tenets; whilst you attribute to these gentlemen the most dreadful maxims, both in your play and the preface to it.

You assure me that you never accused Mr. Jaucourt, who notwithstanding is most certainly the author of the article GOVERNMENT, there is his name in great letters immediately under it; you have extracted several passages from it, which may do him great injury, detached from what goes before, and what follows them, and yet, if taken all together, are worthy of Tully, Grotius, or de Thou. You seem besides not to know that Mr. Jaucourt is of a very illustrious family, and no less respectable for his character than for his birth and fortune.

You find fault with a passage in Mr. D'Alembert's excellent preface to this work. Whilst not a word of any such passage is to

be found in it, and impute to Mr. Diderot what is to be met with only in the Jewish letters. Certainly some Abraham Chaumiex must have furnished you with this passage, as he did the Orator of justice: but you have done more; you have added to your accusations of some of the worthiest men in the world, some shocking things, taken from a foolish pamphlet, called *The Happy Life, or Man a Plant*, which a silly fellow, one La Mettrie wrote in a drunken fit at Berlin, above fifteen years ago. This satire of La Mettrie, long since forgotten, and revived by you, has no more relation to philosophy and the Encyclopædia than the porter of the Chartreux by master Gervaise has to the history of the church; and yet you join all these accusations together: and what is the consequence? Your information falls perhaps into the hands of a prince, a minister, or a magistrate, busied in affairs of importance; perhaps of the queen herself, still more busy in relieving the indigent, and doing good, and who withal is too much taken up with the necessary forms attendant on her high station to have much leisure. One may have time to read cursorily over your preface, which contains but a sheet, and yet not have time to examine and confront with it that immense work to which you impute such abominable tenets. No body knows who this La Mettrie is; many perhaps believe

he

he is one of the writers in the *Encyclopædia*, whom you attack. Thus the innocent, now living, may suffer for the guilty, who are no more. You have done, therefore, more mischief than you thought of, and more than you ever intended; and certainly, if you reflect coolly upon it, must one day feel the most frequent and bitter remorse for it.

Shall I then tell you my sentiments with freedom; Your comedy has been played, and has succeeded. You have now another kind of glory to acquire, and the only way you can do it is, to make in all the journals a public declaration, carefully drawn up, wherein you should acknowledge, that not having a copy of the *Encyclopædia* in your own possession, you had been misled by some unfaithful extracts which had been given you; that you were, as you very reasonably might be, alarmed at such pernicious tenets; but that having since carefully consulted those passages in which such maxims were supposed to be contained; having read with attention the preface to that work, and several other articles equally worthy of admiration, you esteem it a pleasure, as well as duty, to do all deserved justice to the immense labour of the authors, the sublime morality spread throughout their works, and the purity of their manners. This procedure would not, in my opinion, be considered as a retraction, which is the business of those who had misin-

formed you. It would, I think, do you a great deal of honour, and put a happy end to a very unfortunate quarrel.

This, Sir, is my advice; good or bad I know not; after which, I will never in any sort trouble myself with the affair; it has given me uneasiness, and I would fain spend the rest of my life in peace and happiness. I love to laugh. I am old and sickly, and hold gaiety to be a better remedy even than the prescriptions of my dear and honoured friend Tronchin. I shall laugh as much as I can at those who have laughed at me. This will divert me, and can do me no harm. A Frenchman who can't be gay, is out of his element. You are a writer of comedies; be joyous therefore, and do not make the stage a criminal amusement, that may involve you in difficulties, and perhaps ruin you. You are now at your ease; have a respect for your masters and protectors. Fortune is blind; keep her favours, if you can, by honest means, and be happy amongst your worthy friends, if you have *any* such in your coterie*.

* Chaumeix, the writer mentioned in the above letter, was formerly under-master in a school. His principal, a great Jansenist and caballer, brought him up, and made a convulsionist of him. This wretch, after having practised several sorts of trades at Paris, driven from every place, at last has taken refuge at Petersburg, where he is now starving, in the infamous profession of a parasite, to which he is intirely devoted.

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Palissot,

Palissot, so universally known and despised, did not venture to appear at Paris for a long time, being obliged by his creditors to leave that stage of fortune, where knaves play so many capital parts; at length some people of fashion, to whose pleasures this satirical poet had been subservient, found themselves under the necessity of protecting him, and gave him an opportunity of paying his debts. Rascals are sure of meeting with encouragement from the great. He soon shewed his whole character. He was caressed and employed. By attending to the means of raising his fortune, he was in a capacity of acquitting himself to his patrons; but, in spite of all the favours he received, was forced at last to hide himself in one of the provinces on the publication of the *Dunciad*, a work equally contemptible and malicious. This was the only means he could possibly take to avoid a beating, which he would most certainly have received. That which he experienced for his comedy of the *Philosophers* taught him, that a relapse in these cases is generally fatal.

N. B. These two notes are by the French editor of the letters.

LETTER
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found out that you make a great many such
The verse which I put by heart with the
Greatest care, etc. there where the maxim is
turned

L E T T E R IX.

To Mr. de la HARPE, Author of the Earl of Warwick, a Tragedy, which was well received.

S I R,

Nov. 1763.

NEXT to the pleasure of reading your excellent tragedy, was that which I received from the letter you did me the honour to write on that occasion. Your principles are good, and your piece confirms them.

Racine, the first writer amongst us who had taste, like Corneille, was the first who had genius also. The admirable Racine, never sufficiently admired, thought as you do. The pomp of spectacle is never a beauty but when it makes a necessary part of the subject, otherwise it is no more than decoration. Incidents have no merit but when they are natural, and declamation is always childish, especially when it is stuffed with bombast. You applaud yourself for never writing verses that are to be got by heart, and I, Sir, have found out that you make a great many such. The verses which I get by heart with the greatest ease, are those where the maxim is
turned

turned into sentiment, where the poet seems less ambitious of appearing himself than of shewing his characters, where no opportunities are sought after to elevate and surprize; where nature alone speaks, and nothing is said but what ought to be said. These are the verses which I like; judge if I have not reason to be fond of yours.

You have a great deal of merit, and therefore must expect a great many enemies. Formerly, when a man had written any thing good, somebody told brother Vadeblé that he was a Jansenist, brother Vadeblé told it to father Tellier the Jesuit, who told it to the king; at present, if you write a good tragedy, they will say you are an atheist. It is pleasant enough to hear the abuse which the • abbé d'Aubignac, the king's preacher, has lavished on the author of *Cinna*. At all times

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• D'Aubignac, says the French editor, in a note on this passage, a bad preacher, and a still worse writer and poet, published two volumes on the theatre, which are detestable. He was an enemy of the great Corneille, and abused him frequently in the grossest manner.

D'Aubignac's *Pratique du Theatre*, or Practice of the Stage, is notwithstanding, with all due deference both to Mr. Voltaire and his editor, a very good book, and contains many useful observations on the conduct of the drama.

there have been * Frerons in literature; but they say, one must have gnats for nightingales to devour, that they may sing the better. —

* Mr. de la Harpe was abused by Freron, and nick-named by him the Baby of the Stage, after the name of the king of Poland's dwarf. De la Harpe, to be revenged on this hangman of Parnassus, wrote the following tolerable epigram:

Bufo prepar'd to bid the world good night,
Sends for his priest to set all matters right;
Struck with remorse, he makes a long confession
Of many a heinous vice, and foul transgression,
Whoring and drinking, base hypocrisy,
Impudence, lying, and malignity.
And is this all, cries Dominic? Run o'er
The rest, my friend. — Indeed I have no more.
You have forgot, reply'd the priest, by chance,
One crying sin — the sin of — ignorance.

LETTER

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LETTER X.

To Mr. *BLIN, Author of the heroic
Epistles of GABRIELLE D'ESTREES,
mistress of Henry IV.

Ferney, Feb. 1762.

THANKS to my friend — when men like you
admire,

It sooths our pride, and fans the poet's fire.
Never was love in sweeter song display'd;
Never was truth with finer art betray'd.
Critics, perhaps, the tasteless world may tell
Your dying Gabrielle only talks too well;
But feeling hearts compassionate her pains,
Pity her passion, and applaud her strains.

She

* Mr. Blin, as the French editor of these letters informs us, is author of several heroic epistles, and other pieces of poetry universally admired. His stile is easy, and his manner agreeable. He exerted himself with great warmth and humanity in the affair of Calas, which was reheard by the chamber of requests, composed of forty-five sensible and upright judges, who gained immortal honour by their decision of it. There are several good copies of verses of Mr. Blin's in the collection of poems in three volumes, 12mo. published by Mr. Lunan de Boisgermain.

She look'd for pardon to offended heav'n,
 And hop'd a fault like hers might be forgiv'n.
 And so it might, for 'twas a pious thing
 To love so dearly our most-christian king.
 Such fond and tender hearts ev'n saints approve;
 The damn'd are those alone who nothing love.

LETTER

L E T T E R X I .

Supposed to be written by Father CHARLES
GOUJU to his Brethren the Jesuits.

I Conjure, not you only, my dear fellow-countrymen, but all my dear brethren of Germany, Italy, and England, to reflect seriously with me, for your edification, on what is at present going forward with regard to our right reverend fathers the Jesuits, both the well-doing and the well-saying.

I am cousin to Mr. Cazot, and related to Mr. Lionci, whom the right reverend father la Valette, the apostolical first lord of trade, has totally demolished. The lord will, no doubt, have mercy on his first director; but I would beg leave to ask any man who makes use of his reason, whether it is possible that father la Valette, after studying theology for two years, had really any belief in the Christian religion, when, after making a solemn vow of poverty, and consulting the gospel, he traded for six millions? Is there the least probability in nature, that a grave divine, of so much faith and piety, should, with so much ease and indifference, run the hazard of his salvation,
by

by doing any thing so inconsistent with his vows, and so directly opposite to his religion?

That one of the faithful, misled by the violence of his passions, should for once be guilty of a crime, and repent of it, might be expected from the frailty of our nature; but when the masters in Israel rob and plunder, whilst they are preaching and shriving; when they exercise themselves in this manner for whole years together, I must ask you, my dear brethren, if you think it possible that they should thus be always persuaded themselves, and always deceiving others? That they should think of carrying God in their hands at mass, and pillage their neighbours as soon as they come from the holy table?

It appears from the depositions of the conspirators at Lisbon, that their confessors the Jesuits had assured them, they might safely, and with a good conscience, assassinate the king. I would only beg to know whether those who made use of a sacrament to excite men to a parricide, could really believe in that sacrament?

But to pass from these enormous crimes to iniquities of another kind. Do you imagine that the Jesuit Tellier believed in Jesus Christ? Do you even suppose he could believe in a just God,

God, the rewarder of good and evil, whilst he abused the ignorance of Lewis XIV. in religious matters, on purpose to persecute the virtuous cardinal de Noailles, when making no scruple to commit forgery, he shewed his penitentiary letters from several bishops which those bishops had never written? Does not this conduct, persevered in for several years, sufficiently demonstrate that the confessor did not himself believe a word of what he taught?

The adversaries of the Jesuits likewise, who pretended to convulsions and so many other miracles, and who have been convicted of so many impostures, were they better believers than father Tellier?

I say again, a man may believe in God, and yet kill his father; but is it possible he should believe in God, and pass his whole life amidst deliberate crimes, and an uninterrupted series of fraud and imposture? He must repent at last, in his last moments; but I defy you to find in history one single divine who ever acknowledged his crimes on his death-bed.

Amongst the laity we frequently see men, who have been guilty of incest and murder, making public acknowledgement of their sins; but I will be bound to forfeit ten thousand crowns, the remains of all that fortune
which

which father la Valette robbed me of, if you can produce me one penitent divine.

Shall I give you some still more noble examples? Take them from your first popes. Julius II. with his helmet and coat of armour, the voluptuous Leo X. Alexander VI. polluted with incests and assassinations, so many sovereign pontiffs surrounded by mistresses and bastards, laughing at the credulity of mankind in the bosom of riot and debauchery, think you that these ever lifted up to God hands filled with gold, or stained with blood? Did one of them ever repent in their retirement? Whilst we behold Charles the fifth chaunting his *de profundis* to every saint in the Calendar. In every age the true unbelievers, great or little, shaved or mitred, have been all, divines.

If I am not mistaken, this is the manner in which they all argued. The Christian religion which I teach is most certainly not that of the primitive times. It is clear that the communion of the first Christians was not a private mass; it is equally indisputable that the images we invoke were forbidden for more than the two first centuries; that auricular confession was for a long time utterly unknown; that all our rites have been changed, not excepting one of them, and our tenets also. We know when the addition was made to the symbol of the apostles, touching

touching the procedure of the Holy Spirit. Amongst all those opinions, which have cost so much bloodshed, there is not one which can be fairly deduced from the gospel; all is our own work, and all arbitrary: we cannot possibly therefore believe what we teach; we have nothing to do then but to avail ourselves of the folly of mankind; we may venture, without fear, to shrieve our neighbours, and plunder them; to assassinate them, and give them extreme unction.

It is apparent not only that they must have argued thus, but that it is impossible they should have argued in any other manner; for once more I affirm, it is not in nature for a man to say, I firmly believe what I teach, and yet act the direct contrary during my whole life, and even at the last moment of it.

The laity, indeed, especially among the great, have imitated the clergy in all religions. Mustapha said, my musti does not believe in Mahomet, I ought not therefore to believe in him myself, and may strangle my brothers without any fear or scruple whatsoever.

That abominable syllogism, *my religion is false, therefore there is no God*, is as common as any thing I know, and the most fertile source of every crime.

What,

What, my brethren, because Malagrída is an Affassin, le Tellier a forger, la Valette a bankrupt, and the musti a knave, must it follow that there is no supreme being, no creator and preserver, no equitable judge, to punish or reward? I knew a Jacobin friar, a doctor of the Sorbonne, who turned atheist, because the prior of his convent obliged him to maintain within the walls of his cloyster that the virgin Mary was born in sin, whilst in the Sorbonne he was forced to support the contrary. This man said very coolly, my religion is false; if my religion, therefore, which is beyond all dispute the best in the world, carries with it the marks of falshood, there can be no such thing as religion, nor any such thing as a God. What a fool was I to become a Jacobin at the age of fifteen!

I had compassion on this poor man, and talked to him: My dear friend, said I, you were certainly a great fool for becoming a Jacobin; but whether the virgin Mary was maculate or immaculate, would God therefore lose his existence? Would he be less the judge and father of mankind? Does he not command the first Colar of China, as well as the lowest Jacobin, to be just, temperate, and sincere, and do unto every one as he would wish should be done unto him, and to love one another in honour? Tenets change, my friend; but God never changeth. The Cordelier St. Bonaventure, and the Jacobin

cobin St. Thomas, are scarce ever of the same opinion; nevertheless they are, with a number of other saints, encircling the throne of glory, and waiting for many more who reason no better than themselves. Never do you think like Thomas, or like Bonaventure. Some books have been misinterpreted, others forged; does that give you concern? Comfort yourself, my friend; the great volume of nature cannot be misinterpreted: there it is written, Adore one God; be just and charitable, kind and benevolent. If the holy fathers, the children of Ignatius, had given this excellent precept a place in their Catholic Catechism, they might have filled the world with good and valuable men: they might have ranked with other saints in the circle of God, and we should not, as we now do, have congratulated mankind on their destruction.

I perceived, on concluding, that my sermon, though a little too long, had made a strong impression on my * Jacobin.

* Father la Valette, so well known amongst us, was three years at London after the famous bankruptcy of his society. He went by the name of le chevalier Duclos, and assumed the character of a †

† This is an excellent and sensible letter.—How little should we have to complain of with regard to this ingenious writer's religious opinions,

— *si sic*
Omnia dixisset!

financier

financier in that large city, the general resort of foreign adventurers. He seemed to be of opinion, that having cheated the society of Jesus, he might also take the liberty to cheat some of his particular friends. He left London very suddenly about fifty thousand crowns in debt, to play some new part on another stage. This sharper was seen afterwards at Liege, and decamping from thence, now wanders about, levying contributions in every place on all such fools as judge of men only by external appearance.

N. B. This note is subjoined by the French editor. It is not easy to determine what he means by the word Financier in this place, as we have no English word properly correspondent to it, except perhaps that of an exciseman, an office which would hardly have been entrusted to this gentleman. I am rather inclined to think he meant a kind of private banker, broker, or dealer in money-matters, probably only amongst those of his own persuasion. This whole story of his residence in London seems to want confirmation.

LETTER

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LETTER XII.

To Mr. D'ALEMBERT.

THOUGH some pedants among us have warmly attacked philosophy, they have had no great reason to value themselves upon it, as she can now boast of her alliance with the northern powers. The empress of Russia's excellent letter has given you ample-revenge. It puts us in mind of the epistle which Philip wrote to Aristotle, with this difference only, that Aristotle accepted the honourable employment, the education of Alexander, which you have the glory of refusing.

I remember, when I was young, I had no Idea that the time would ever come when such a letter should be written from Moscow to a member of the French academy. I was an eye-witness of the rise of that empire, and behold! four women have at length completed what one man had begun.

Surely some compliments are due from our native gallantry to the fair sex, on a circumstance so extraordinary, and of which history
can

can furnish us with no example. What a charming letter has this Catherine wrote! Neither St. Catherine of Boulogne, nor St. Catherine of Sienna ever wrote half so good a one. If princesses apply themselves to the cultivation of their minds, the Salic law must quickly be abolished.

Have you not observed, my dear friend, that all our great examples, and all our most useful knowledge, comes from the north? Newton, Locke, Gustavus, Peter, and the rest of them, were not educated at Rome, in the college *de Propaganda*.

I have read lately a most voluminous * apology for the Jesuits, wherein all the great geniuses

* This apology for the Jesuits was written by father Ceruti, at present an abbé. This man, who was formerly a Jesuit, is patronised by the princess of Carignan, who has given him an apartment in her own palace at Paris. Some Jansenists scruple not also to assert, that both the apologist and his brother Berthier have private pensions from several ladies about the court, strongly attached to the late modest and humble society of Jesuits.

D'Alembert certainly deserves the thanks of his countrymen, for his generous refusal of the offer made him by the empress of Russia. It is noble in a queen to invite a philosopher to her court, to instruct her son, and teach him to promote the happiness and glory of his country; but a Frenchman, whose merit and virtues are all that he can boast, should never banish himself, but remain devoted to his country, and his friends.

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niuses of our age are enumerated. — They are all Jesuits. There is, says the author, Perrussau, Neuville, Griffet, Chapelain, Baudori, Buffier, Debillon, Castel, Laborde, Briet, Garnier, Pezenas, Siennet, Hut, and to crown all, says he, the great Berthier, who has so long been the oracle of men of letters. Now I protest (and I have as good a right to be believed as Mr. Chicaneau) I never heard of any of these gentlemen, except brother Berthier, the journalist, who I thought died on his way to Versailles, and who unfortunately confessed himself, without knowing it, to the ecclesiastical gazetteer the abbé Poignard, who refused him absolution three times.

I am very glad to find that France can still boast of so many great men. I am told, that,

friends. Perdition on those weak and inconstant minds, who sell to foreigners their talents and their service! A Frenchman should not, cannot, indeed, live with any satisfaction out of his own country. Of this Voltaire is a miserable example, which should be a warning to all men of sense and abilities, and teach them to avoid the great, their most cruel and contemptible enemies. To be happy with these, we must be ambitious, mean, and dirty. The man of merit should never so debase and prostitute himself, as to offer incense to such idols. They are unworthy the regard of genius, and only fit to be a prey to flatterers and courtizans.

N. B. This note by the French editor.

that, amongst these sublime geniuses, there is one Mr. Le Roi, a famous preacher, whose eloquence is equal to that of father Garasse. To speak seriously, if any thing does honour to the age we live in, it is, in my opinion, the three memorials of Mariette, Beaumont, and l'Oiseau, in favour of the unfortunate family of Calas. Thus to employ their time, their eloquence, and their credit, and without any reward, to succour the oppressed; this is truly great, and brings us nearer to the times of Cicero and Hortensius than those of Briet, de Hut, and brother Berthier. I have pleasing expectations of the judgment that will be given. Thank heaven, Europe has already determined it, and I know of no more infallible tribunal than that of all honest men, in different countries, joining in the same opinion: they form together a body corporate, which cannot err, because it has not that spirit which in other bodies corporate doth generally preside.

I know nothing of the little libel you mention, where I am abused for my Examen of some pieces of Crebillon. I am a stranger both to the Examen, and the abuse of it. I should have enough to do, if I were to read all these beggarly scraps. Peter the Great and Corneille find me sufficient employment. I have got as far as Pertharite, and intend to portion out the niece of that noble writer to comfort myself under the abuse which I expect

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expect for it. We shall put it into the contract that she is cousin-german to Chimene, and that she is no relation to Grimauld, or Mulple. Perhaps she may have had a child before the edition is finished. A number of people of fashion have subscribed generously. The graver says their names are not quite so valuable as bank-bills.

I have sent the academy my translation of Heraclius from Calderon. You will see which is the original, Calderon or Corneille. You will die with laughing at some parts of it; you will find, notwithstanding, in Calderon, some fine strokes of genius. You will receive soon my General History also. The picture which I have drawn this time of human nature is a three-quarters length; in the other editions it was only a profile. Old as I am, I begin to know it better every Day.

Adieu, my dear and illustrious philosopher. I am obliged to dictate this; for I grow blind, like la Motte. When the abbé Trublet knows this, perhaps he will have a better opinion of my verses.

LETTER

LETTER XIII.

To his Royal Highness the ELECTOR
PALATINE, at Manheim.

Ferney, Aug. 14. 1761.

WOULD gracious heaven hear the pray'r,
And grant the wish of poor Voltaire,
'Twou'd be to see the happy day,
When news most welcome shall impart
Joy unfeign'd to ev'ry heart,
And I with honest rapture say,
* I've seen the lovely babe, my fears are o'er,
These aged eyes shall wish to see no more.

Your highness will pardon this enthusiasm;
my transport must plead my excuse. I know
not what I am doing. My letter, I fear, is
wanting in the etiquette. At the birth of the
duke of Burgundy, all the boys danced in the
apartments of Lewis XIV. I should be a
great boy at Schwetzingen, if I could have
the happiness of throwing myself at the feet
of the father, mother, and child. Peace and
an

* The original is an allusion to a passage of scripture,
and borders a little upon the profane.

an heir together are fortunate events indeed. I fall at your knees, my lord, and embrace them with joy. You and the electress will pardon, I hope, my bad prose, my bad verses, my profound respect, and the intoxication of my heart, and condescend to preserve some regard for your little Swiss,

VOLTAIRE.

E LETTER

LETTER XIV.

To his Royal Highness the ELECTOR
PALATINE, at Manheim.

Ferney, Sept. 9, 1761.

TIS over then : I give you joy,
My noble friend, or girl or boy,
It matters not ; when Providence
Thinks fit her blessings to dispense,
She keeps her secrets cover'd o'er,
Nor lets us know her mind before :
* And we, poor mortals, good or ill,
Wise, foolish, great, or little, still
Must blindly her behests fulfil.
As we know nothing of her plan,
Must grope our way out as we can.
'The machinist, you understand,
Who is above, with pow'rful hand
Directs the whole ; and man, I ween,
Is nothing but a poor machine.

Perhaps

* The same thought is to be met with in one of our
best poets:

——— this coercive force
Without your choice must take its course.

Great

Perhaps all is not as it cou'd be;
 But all, no doubt, is as it shou'd be.
 We know, of all the worlds at least
 That cou'd have been, this is the best;
 And, spite of sickness, grief, and pain,
 We have no reason to complain.

To have a son and heir, tho' late,
 Were doubtless better for the state;
 And if a son like you is giv'n,
 It is the noblest gift of heav'n.

If haply 'tis a daughter — well,
 I greet you; for on her shall dwell
 Each grace and beauty, that unite
 To catch the gazing lover's sight,

And

Great kings to wars are pointed forth,
 As loaded needles to the north;
 And thou and I, by pow'r unseen,
 Are barely passive, and suck'd in
 To Heinault's vaults, or Celia's chamber,
 As straw and paper are by amber.
 If we sit down to play, or set
 (Suppose at ombre or basset)
 Let people call us cheats or fools,
 Our cards and we are equal tools,
 We sure in vain the cards condemn,
 Ourselves both cut and shuffle them,
 In vain on fortune's aid rely;
 She only is a stander-by.
 Poor men! poor papers! we and they
 Do some impulsive force obey,
 And are but play'd with — do not play.

And draw admirers to her arms,
The rival of her mother's charms.

Illustrious pair ! if ever I,
As poets may, can prophesy,
The offspring of thy nuptial bed,
Or smiling boy, or beauteous maid,
Shall be the theme of ev'ry tongue,
And worthy them from whom it sprung.


And yet, my lord, in spite of all I have said, the affair is of consequence to me, and I would come post immediately to know which it is, if that same Providence, which does all for the best, had not treated me most cruelly. She has indeed used your poor little old Swifs extremely ill, and made me the most miserable, decrepid, and shrivelled mortal which this best of all possible worlds can produce.

I should really make an excellent figure amidst the rejoicings of your electoral highness. It was only, I think, in the Egypt of antiquity that skeletons were admitted to a place in their festivals. To say the truth, my lord, it is all over with me. I laugh indeed sometimes; but am forced to acknowledge that pain is an evil. It is a comfort to me that your highness is well; but I am fitter for an extreme unction than a baptism. May the peace serve for an æra to
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mark the prince's birth; and may his * august father preserve his regard for, and accept the profound respects of, his little Swiss,

 VOLTAIRE.

* Mr. Voltaire has praised with the greatest degree of justice this excellent prince and princess, who in the easiest and politest manner take a pleasure in distinguishing all the men of letters and genius who frequent their court, which is remarkable for its taste, magnificence, and every virtue which adorns humanity.

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LETTER

LETTER XV.

To Mr. DIODATI, on his Dissertation on
the Italian Language.

S I R,

Ferney, Jan. 24, 1761.

I AM thoroughly sensible of the honour you did me, by your kind present of a treatise on the excellency of the Italian tongue: it was sending a lover an eulogium on his mistress. You will notwithstanding pardon me, I hope, a few reflections in favour of the French language. When a mistress falls upon us we may sometimes take the part of a wife.

No language, I believe, is intirely perfect. It happens in this, as in many other things, that the learned receive laws from the ignorant. It is the multitude who have formed every language: the workmen have given names to their instruments: the people got together and invented terms to express their several wants and necessities; and, after a number of years, the men of genius who rose up were obliged to make use, as well as they could, of such phrases and expressions

as had been established by mere chance, and the caprice of a multitude.

I think there are but two languages in the world that are truly harmonious, the Greek and the Latin. They are indeed the only ones whose verse has any true measure, the certain rhythmus, a proper mixture of dactyls and spondees, and a real value in the syllables. The ignorant people who formed these languages had certainly a better taste, a finer ear, and senses more delicate than other nations.

You have indeed, as you observe, long and short syllables in your beautiful Italian tongue, and so have we: but neither you nor we, nor any other people have the true dactyl and spondee. Our verses are characterised by the number, and not by the syllable. • *La bella lingua Toscana*, say you, *e la figlie primogenita del Latino*. True, Sir, enjoy your birth-right; but let the younger sisters come in for their part of the patrimony.

I have always looked upon the Italians as our masters; but you must acknowledge we are good disciples. Almost every language in Europe has its beauties and its faults. You
E 4 have

• The beautiful Italian language is the eldest daughter of the Latin.

have not those melodious noble terminations of the Spaniards, which a happy union of vowels and consonants renders so sonorous; *las Ombres, las Historias, los Cotumbres*: You want likewise the diphthongs, which have so melodious an affect in our language; *les rois, les empereurs, les exploits, les histoires*. You find fault with our *e* mute, which you call a harsh and melancholy sound, which expires as it were in the mouth; and yet in the *e* mute principally consists the great harmony both of our prose and verse; *empire, couronne, diadème, flamme, tendresse, victoire*, all these happy terminations leave a sound in the ear, after the pronounciation of the word, like a harpsichord, that rings after the finger is off the keys.

You must allow that the vast variety of these falls must have some advantage over the five single terminations of every word in your language; and even out of these five you must take away the last: for you have not above seven or eight words that end in *u*; so that there are in effect only four sounds, *a, e, i, o*, that finish every Italian word.

Do you really think the ear of a foreigner can be charmed, when he reads for the first time, *il capitano ch'el grand sepolcro libero di Cristo, e che molto opro col senno, et colla mano?* Can you imagine all these sounds can be agreeable

agreeable to an ear unaccustomed to them? Compare with this dull dry uniformity, so disagreeable to a foreigner, these two plain verses of Corneille:

*Le destin se declare, & nous venons d'entendre
Ce qu'il a résolu du beau-père & du gendre.*

You may observe every word has a different termination. Pronounce now these two verses of Homer:

Εξ ἔσθ' ἡ τὰ πρῶτα δ' ἰασητὴν εἰσαντε
Ἀτρεΐδης τε ἀναξ ἀνδρῶν, καὶ δῖος Ἀχιλλεύς.

Pronounce these verses before any young person, English or German, who has any ear, they will certainly prefer the Greek, barely suffer the French, and be shocked with the perpetual repetition of the same termination in the Italian. This I have myself several times experienced.

You boast the extraordinary copiousness of your language; you will at the same time allow we are none of the poorest. There is in reality no idiom in the world which expresses all the gradations of things: they are all poor in this respect. None of them, for example, can express, in one word, that love which is founded on esteem, or that which is founded on beauty alone; that which

arises from a conformity of manners, and that which springs from the necessity of loving something. Thus it is with all the passions and qualities of the soul, that which we feel the most, is what we most stand in need of words to express.

But do not imagine, Sir, were we reduced to the extreme indigence which you reproach us with. You have made out a long catalogue, of two pages, of your superfluities, and our poverty. On one side, you have placed *orgoglio, alterigia, superbia*, and on the other only *orgueil*; but besides *orgueil*, Sir, we have *superbe, hauteur, fierté, elevation, dedain, arrogance, insolence, gloire, gloriole, presumption, outre-cuidance*; all these words express the different shades and gradations of pride, in the same manner as with you *orgoglio, alterigia, superbia*, are not always synonymous.

In your alphabet you find fault with us for having but one word to signify *valiant*. I know very well, Sir, that your nation is very valiant when it has a mind, or other people have a mind that it should be so; both Germany and France have been so happy as to have in their service many brave and noble Italian officers.

L'italico valor non è ancor morto.

But

But if you have *valente, prode, animoso*, we also have *vaillant, valeureux, preux, courageux, intrepide, hardi, animé, audacieux, brave, &c.* Courage and bravery have several different characters, which are expressed by so many different words. We would say our generals are valiant, courageous, brave; but we would distinguish the lively and bold courage of that general, who carried sword in hand all the works at Port-mahon, cut out of the live rock, from that deliberate, constant, active firmness with which one of our chiefs saved a whole garrison from inevitable destruction, and marched thirty leagues in sight of the enemy's forces, consisting of thirty thousand.

We would express differently also that calm intrepidity which some pretended connoisseurs admired in the youngest nephew of the hero of the Valteline, who seeing his army routed, occasioned by the panic of our allies at Rosbach, which produced our own also, having observed the regiment of Diefbach and one more who stood firm and unbroken, as if they had been victorious, though they were surrounded by the cavalry, and battered by the cannon, marched up to them alone, praised their valour, firmness, intrepidity, patience, boldness, spirit, bravery, &c. You see, Sir, what a number of terms we have to express one thing. Afterwards he had the courage to rally these two regiments,

ments, and save them from an imminent danger, which their extraordinary bravery had led them into, conducted them safely in the face of a victorious enemy; and shewed still greater strength of mind, in supporting the bitter and inexhaustible reproaches of the foolish multitude, who are always too soon and too well acquainted with every thing, be it good or bad.

You may remark, Sir, that the courage, valour, and firmness of the men who guarded Cassel and Gottingen, and held out against sixty thousand of the enemy, was a courage composed of activity, boldness, and foresight; as was that also of him who saved Wezel. Believe then, Sir, I intreat you, that we have in our language a power of expressing every thing which the defenders of our country have the power to perform.

You insult us also with the word *ragout*, as if it were the only term we had to express our several courses. I wish to God you were right; it would be better, I believe, for my health; but, unhappily for us, we have a whole kitchen dictionary full of them.

You seem proud of having two words that signify *glutton*; but pray, Sir, call to mind, and at the same time lament, our *gourmands*, *goulus*, *friands*, *mangeurs*, and *gloutons*.

For

For the *man of knowledge* you don't remember that we have any word besides *scavant*; but be pleased, Sir, to add *docte*, *erudit*, *instruit*, *eclairé*, you will find, I believe, both the name and the thing amongst us; and thus it is with regard to every thing you have reproached us for. We have indeed no diminutives, though we had as many as you in the time of Marot, Rabelais, and Montaigne; but this puerile mode of expression seemed beneath the dignity of a language ennobled by such writers as Pascal, Bossuet, Fenelon, Pellisson, Corneille, Boileau, Racine, Massillon, Fontaine, la Bruyere, and Rousseau. We left the *ottes* and *ettes* to Ronfard, Marot, and Dubartas, and only kept *fleurette*, *amourette*, *fillette*, *grandelette*, *veillotte*, *nabotte*, *maisonette*, and *villotte*; and even these we never make use of when we speak or write in the familiar stile. Don't imitate Matthei therefore, who, in his speech to the academy of la Crusca, dwells so largely on the vast advantage of calling *corbellò corbellino*, forgetting at the same time that we have *corbeil* and *corbillon*.

You have advantages over us of much greater consequence, that particularly of inversions. You can make a hundred good verses in Italian with more ease than we can make six in French, and the reason is, because you allow yourselves, that *hiatus*, those gapings of syllables which we don't admit of,
because

because all your words end in *a, e, i, or o*, because you have at least twenty times as many rhymes as we have, and because, which is still more desirable, you can do without any rhymes at all.

But do not reproach our language with roughness, bad prosody, barrenness, or obscurity; your own translations * prove the contrary. Read moreover every thing that Mess. D'Olivet and du Marfais have said concerning the manner of speaking our language with propriety. Read Mr. •Duclos, and Douchet; observe with what force and perspicuity, with what energy and grace, Mr. D'Alembert and Mr. Diderot express themselves! what picturesque phrases are often made use of by du Buffon, Helvetius, and Rousseau, even in works that do not appear susceptible of them!

I shall put an end to this letter, already too long, by one reflection; if to the common people we owe the formation of languages, to great writers we are indebted for the

* Diodati translated into Italian the *Peruvian Letters*, by M. de Graffigny, and published them, in 2 vols. 12mo. with the original. His *Dissertation on the Italian Language* was much talked of, probably on account of the above letter from Voltaire concerning it. The French editor tells us, in a note on this letter, that Voltaire only wrote it to make his court to some great people, and give himself an air of importance with men of literature.

the perfection of them; and the best of all languages is that which can boast of the best works in it.

I have the honour to be, with the greatest esteem, both for yourself and the Italian language,

S I R,

Your, &c. &c.

ANOTHER

ANOTHER ANSWER

FROM

Mr. VOLTAIRE to Mr. DIODATI.

Ferney, Feb. 1, 1761.

I.

TALK not to me of your exalted worth,
Your wealth, your fame, your honours, and your
birth;
'Tis foolish pride, my friend; you seldom see
Men, highly born, boast of their pedigree.

II.

Tho' France has long by Italy been taught,
And still reveres her mistress as she ought;
Yet keen reproach, like yours, may pay the debt,
And make the warmest gratitude — forget.

III.

Beyond our childhood, we have quitted long
Our ancient nurse, and now are grown so strong,
We scorn the milk which once our weaker frame
Sustain'd, and proud return from whence we came.

IV. H

IV.

If aught could made us jealous, 'twere the song
 * Of Diodati in his rival's tongue.
 Do not thy own fair image then deface,
 Nor do an inj'ry where thou ow'st a grace.

V.

No longer let us squabble for the prize,
 Equality, you know, contents the wise:
 Henceforth let this thy happiness enhance,
 'Tis no disgraceful lot to rival France.

* Alluding to his elegant translations from the French.

LETTER

LETTER XVI.

To Mr. BAILLON, Intendant of Lyons, on account of a poor Jew taken up for uttering contraband Goods.

BLESSINGS on the Old Testament, which gives me this opportunity of telling you, that amongst all those who adore the New, there is not one more devoted to your service than myself, a certain descendant of Jacob, a pedlar, as all these gentlemen are, whilst he is waiting for the Messiah, waits also for your protection, which at present he has the most need of. Some honest men, of the first trade of St. Matthew, who gather together the Jews and Christians at the gates of your city, have seized something in the breeches pocket of an Israelitish page, belonging to the poor circumcised, who has the honour to tender you this billet, with all proper submission and humility. I beg leave to join my Amen to his at a venture.

I but just saw you at Paris * as Moses saw the Deity, and should be very happy in seeing

* See Voltaire's Dictionnaire Philosophique.

ing you face to face. If the word face can any ways be applied to me, preserve some remembrance of your old eternal humble servant, who loves you with that chaste and tender affection, which the religious Solomon had for his three hundred Shunamites.

LETTER

LETTER XVII.

To the Count de SERBETTI, on the new
Edition of Corneille.

S I R,

Ferney, Aug. 13, 1762.

I AM old, infirm, and overloaded with useless and unnecessary employments, three excuses for not answering your kind letter. I find them all three disagreeable enough; I bear the weakness of my own dotage tolerably; but cannot so well reconcile myself to that of Corneille, which nevertheless must, it seems, be published; because the world, who have not so much taste as curiosity, will have all a man's follies, as well as his works. I know you are a lover of truth, and because you think she is dear to me also, pardon my poor abilities. I flatter myself you will find some proofs of my adherence to her in the new edition of my General History. I had sketched human nature; I hope now I have drawn her at full length.

I believe Mess. Cramer the booksellers propose publishing these additions in a separate volume. I leave the correction of the
press

press intirely to them, as I have no * interest in the affair. All I have to do is to search out the truth as well as I can, and the applause of men of merit like yourself is my reward.

I am, with the greatest respect,

Your's, &c.

* Mr. Voltaire (says the French editor) gave away all the profits of his *Universal History* to the booksellers of Geneva, and has made presents of all his productions for these fifteen years past, either to actors, or some of his particular friends. Mr. Voltaire's enemies either do not believe this, or can see very little merit in it. Such instances of generosity are notwithstanding very rare. We should praise the meritorious actions of an enemy, as well as a friend. Any man who, as Voltaire did, could portion out the niece of the great Corneille, would surely deserve to be immortalized.

LETTER

LETTER XVIII.

To Mr. LA COMBE, an eminent Lawyer,
on the Letters of Christina Queen of Swe-
den, published at Paris.

SIR,

Ferney, June 13, 1763.

I Received, the day before yesterday, by the dutchess D'Anville, the private letters of the queen of Sweden, which you did me the honour to send me. I am not surpris'd to find how much you are shocked at the * assassination of her gentleman-usher, nor at the indignation which you express against that cruel and capricious woman.

You do other kingdoms too much honour, I am afraid, when you say that Christina would have been punished any where but in France. Punished she would most certainly have been, in countries where justice and the laws preside; but those countries are few in number; and, to speak the real truth, I know

* In the gallery at Fontainebleau, for which she was commanded to quit the kingdom by Lewis XIV. who held this act of hers in the utmost detestation.

know of no place where they are strictly observed. This woman, wicked as she was, might most assuredly have remained with impunity at Rome, Madrid, or Vienna, and in short in any place where one man extinguishes all laws, and money is the only God.

I should be greatly obliged to you for any intelligence with regard to the authenticity of these letters. I have published some of Henry IVth's in the new edition of my *General History*, which are extremely curious, which I did from the love I bear to the memory of that illustrious hero, the only monarch of France, who was an honour to human nature, who is intitled to our blessings, our regret, and our everlasting remembrance of him. I am obliged for these divine letters to Mr. La Mothe, who copied them at Andouin from the original. I am yet to learn whether the letters of Christina were written in Italian, and translated by you into French; and am sorry to find in them the words *pompons* and *culotins*, which have been adopted into our language within my own memory.

If the letters are really Christina's, it might not be improper to observe, that a person who abdicates a crown on purpose to run about, and see the world, ought at least to be wise; and even if we suppose her obliged

to

to write with all that imprudent pride, we shall be apt more to condemn than to pity her. It had been very easy for this princess to have acquired glory whilst she was on the throne: the daughter of Gustavus might have been adored, even if she had done nothing but common things, like other princes, the reputation of her father was so great, that the people would readily have made allowance for all the follies of her sex, and even for all the mischief which she might have done if she had dared. Those must be born without the least share either of wit or virtue who can't shine upon a throne, and immortalize themselves by what are called good actions, which by the way are much more easily performed than such as are truly great and noble.

The book, however, is a valuable relic, and may serve at least as an example to other princes, who may have the same foolish desire to abdicate. I thank you for the present, and hope you will endeavour to clear up my doubts concerning it.

I have the honour to be,

Sir, your's, &c.

LETTER

LETTER XIX.

To the Sieur FEZ, Bookseller at Avignon.

IN your letter from Avignon, dated April 30, you propose to sell me, for a thousand crowns, the whole edition of a collection of Voltaire's mistakes, both with regard to maxims and historical facts, which you tell me you printed in the pope's dominions. I think myself in conscience obliged to inform you, that in composing a new edition of my works, I have discovered, in the first, above two thousand crowns worth of errors, and as in quality of author, I have probably mistaken about one half on my own side; this you see would amount to at least twelve thousand livres; so that I should cheat you of nine thousand francs. Observe moreover what you get on the account of maxims; this is an affair particularly interesting to all the powers engaged in war, from the Baltic to Gibraltar; I am not therefore in the least surprised when you inform me, that the work is universally sought after.

F

General

General Laudon, and the whole imperial army, cannot possibly take less than thirty thousand copies, which you will sell at forty sous a piece; that you know is - Livres. 60000

The king of Prussia, who is passionately fond of maxims, and more busy about them at present than ever, will help you off with nearly the same quantity, which will be 60000

You may depend also on prince Ferdinand; for I always observed, when I had the honour of paying my respects to him, he was happy in finding out my mistakes of this kind; you may therefore put him down, for twenty thousand, - 40000

With regard to the French army, where they talk more French than the Austrians and Prussians put together; you may send them at least a hundred thousand copies, which, at forty sous each, will amount to 200000

360000

Brought

Brought over 360000

In England and the colonies,
where these islanders study from
morning till night to find out my
mistakes, and turn them to their
own advantage, you may hope at
least to dispose of a hundred thou-
sand, - - - 200000

As to monks and divines,
who deal particularly in this kind
of ware, you can't set them down
at less, in all parts of Europe, than
a hundred thousand, which makes
in all, - - - 600000

Add to this list about a hundred
thousand lovers of the dogmatic
amongst the laity, - - - 200000

1360000

Sum-total one million three hundred and
sixty thousand livres, which you will touch
at one stroke, from which, some little ex-
pence being deducted, the net produce re-
maining for you will be at least one mil-
lion.

I cannot therefore sufficiently admire your
disinterestedness, in sacrificing so large a sum

to me, on paying down only three thousand livres. The only thing which could prevent my accepting your proposal would be the fear of offending Mr. Inquisitor of the faith, or for the faith, who no doubt has given you his imprimatur, for certain masses which he will say for you; that is, if you pay him honestly for them. This sanction once given, must not be given in vain; the faithful must rejoice in it, and I should be afraid of excommunication, were I to suppress an edition so useful, approved by a Jacobine, and printed at Avignon,

• As to your anonymous author, who has dedicated his evening vigils to this important work, I admire his modesty. I beg my best compliments to him, as well as to your ink-merchant.

I am, in hopes of becoming better, and acknowledging my faults with all humility, yours, &c.

• Though Mr. Voltaire (says the French editor) diverts himself thus agreeably with his own mistakes, he was not much pleased at the discovery of so many blunders, anachronisms, and contradictions, which Mr. Berthier and others found out in his Universal History.

LETTER

L E T T E R . XX.

To the King of PRUSSIA *, on his
Recovery.

IN Pluto's dark abodes, the sisters three,
Who weave too fast the threads of destiny,
As 'long the Styx they took their ev'ning walk,
Had often heard the wand'ring spirits talk
Of Prussia's gallant deeds, the laws he made,
The wars he fought, the virtues he display'd.
As thus they trac'd the hero from his birth,
They took him for the oldest king on earth;
And as his wond'rous acts they counted o'er,
Instead of forty, wrote him down fourscore.
Then Atropos, to kings a hateful name,
Dispatch'd by gloomy Dis, to Berlin came;
Her fatal shears prepar'd, expecting there
To find a poor old man, with silver hair,
And wrinkled forehead: — Great was her surprise,
To see his auburn locks, and sparkling eyes;
To see him wield the sword, to hear him play
On the soft flute, his jovial roundelay.

F 3

She

* This very pretty complimentary letter is not to be met with in the new edition of Voltaire's works, and was never printed before, though written above fifteen years ago. The thought is well carried on; but the poem ends flatly and abruptly.

She call'd to mind how once Alcides great,
And smooth-tongu'd Orpheus, brav'd the pow'r of
fate;

She trembled when she saw, in Prussia join'd,
The voice of Orpheus, with Alcides' mind;
Affrighted, threw her fatal shears aside,
And home returning, to her sisters cry'd,
For Prussia weave a new and golden thread,
Lasting as that for god-like Lewis made.
In the same cause did both the heroes fight;
'Gainst the same foes with equal zeal unite.
Both gain'd by wond'rous acts immortal fame;
The same their valour, and their end the same;
And both hereafter shall — but soft; the muse
No longer the unequal task pursues;
Two living monarchs aptly to design,
Requires an abler pen, and stronger pow'rs than
mine.

LETTER

LETTER XXI.

To Mr. ROUSSEAU*, of Toulouse,
 Director of the Encyclopædian Journal,
 printed at Bouillin, concerning a letter
 inserted in the *St. James's Chronicle*,
 July, 1762.

S I R,

Ferney, Oct. 10, 1762.

I N answer to yours of August 14, for which I am greatly obliged to you, I must inform you, that the duke of Grafton, who has been in my neighbourhood for some time past, shewed me, in the *St. James's Chronicle*, a letter attributed to me; but apparently the produce of Grub-street, or the charnel-house of St. Innocent. I must be obliged, out of regard to my character, to contradict this impertinent rhapsody in all the English papers. Men of sense and candor know what credit is to be given to idle re-

F 4

ports

* There were at this time at Paris three Rousseaus; Mr. Rousseau of Toulouse; the celebrated John Baptist Rousseau, an eminent poet; and the famous John James Rousseau of Geneva, equally distinguished for his extraordinary abilities, his ingenious paradoxes, and the persecutions which he has suffered from bigotry and enthusiasm.

ports of this kind, which the public is overrun with, and heartily tired of.

With regard to the German critique on my *History of Peter the Great*, I shall be glad to see it in your Journal. Those remarks, which are sensible and judicious, will be of service to me in the second volume. I may very probably be mistaken in some points, though I have followed as nearly as I could the memoirs sent me from * Petersburg.

There was a gross error in the manuscript concerning religion; the patriarch Nicholas was mistaken for the patriarch Photius, who lived an hundred years before him. This has been corrected in several copies. In another place, Apraxin is put for Nariskin. As to matters of fact, if they are contested, the archives of Petersburg must answer for me. My *History of Charles XII.* was severely criticised; the criticisms are forgotten, the history remains.

* The French editor tells us, in a note on this passage, that Mr. Voltaire's *History of Peter the Great* is nothing but a Gazette, and that it was written by him merely to conciliate the favour of the court of Russia.

LETTER

LETTER XXII.

To Mr. ROUSSEAU, of Toulouse.

S I R,

YOU wrote to me some time ago concerning a letter, as ridiculous as it was injurious, printed in my name, in the *English Monthly Review* for June; I then signified to you both my resentment and contempt of this very visible imposture; but as some very respectable characters are attacked in this letter, it is of consequence that the author should be discovered: I therefore hereby promise a reward of fifty louis-d'ors to any one who will convict him, &c.

F 5

LETTER

LETTER XXIII.

To Mr. de la FARGUE, a Poet, who
had addressed some verses to him.

S I R,

THE less I deserve your elegant verses,
the more I am pleased with them. Beauties
receive the compliments paid them with in-
difference; the homely are delighted with
them: I would have answered you in some
verses of my own, if I had not been so
deeply engaged in those of Corneille. Every
moment that I spare from my commentary
on the works of that great man, is a robbery
of him. I cannot, however, deny myself
the pleasure of thanking you, and saying
with how much esteem I have the honour
to be,

Sir, yours, &c.

LETTER

LETTER XXIV.

From Mr. VOLTAIRE's Secretary
to the Secretary of Mr. le FRANC de
POMPIGNAN.

S I R,

YOU wrote three letters to Mr. de Voltaire, signed Ladouz, at the Hotel des Asturies, wherein you inform him that you had been secretary to the famous Mr. le Franc de Pompignan; but that you have no longer the honour to belong to him, being dismissed on a suspicion of having furnished Mr. de Voltaire with memoirs against him. The falsity of this you desired Mr. Voltaire to attest. His answer was, that he knew nothing of you, nor you of him; and that he never received any memoirs against Mr. le Franc de Pompignan but his own works, which being himself old, infirm, and almost blind, he has now commissioned me to repeat to you.

This then is the substance of all he knows concerning Mr. le Franc de Pompignan.

I. Some

1. Some very indifferent verses.
2. An oration before the academy, in which he insults all men of genius and letters.
3. A memorial to the king, wherein he informs his majesty, that he has an excellent library at Pompignan.
4. The description of a fine feast, which he made at Pompignan, and the procession in which he marched behind a young Jesuit, accompanied by all the bagpipes in the country; with an account of a treat of six and twenty covers, which was talked of all over the province.
5. A fine sermon of his own composing, where he tells us, that he was with the stars in the firmament, whilst the preachers of Paris, and all the men of letters, stood below in the mire.
6. A fine wife, very rich, very devout, and very amiable, who cries night and morning for the loss of her dear friends the faithful Ignatians, who has brought the signor de Pompignan, her worthy spouse, a son and heir, and who is now very sorry she was made to believe that she had married an Apollo, &c.

My

My master has likewise been informed, that Mr. le Franc de Pompignan (though he is drowned) compared himself to Moses, and his brother the bishop to Aaron; he desires his compliments to them.

He has also heard talk of a pastoral of the bishop's, addressed to the inhabitants of Puy, in Velai, by Mr. Cortiat, secretary. He is told, that in this pastoral mention is made of Aristophanes, Diogenes, the Encyclopædia, Fontenelle, la Motte, Perrault, Terrasson, Boindin, Bacon, Descartes, Mallebranche, Lock, Newton, Leibnitz, Montesquieu, &c. We congratulate the gentleman of Puy in Velai, on having perused all these writers: like master, like man; but Mr. Voltaire enters into none of these scientific squabbles: he tills his land, and leaves to great men the honour of enlightening the age they live in.

You acquaint him that the bishop of Alais will take you for his secretary, provided you can get an attestation in due form that you never betrayed the secrets of Mr. le Franc de Pompignan; this attestation he readily sends you, and hopes that when you are settled at Alais, you will not be like the secretary Cortiat.

I am, Sir,

Whatever you please to stile me, &c. &c.

P. S.

P. S. I ask pardon, Sir; I had forgot to mention, amongst the works of Mr. de Pom-pignan, the Deist's Prayer, which he has elegantly translated from the English into excellent French, and in a fine modern stile.

LETTER

LETTER XXV.

To Mr. ROUSSEAU, Director of the
Encyclopædian Journal.

S I R,

Paradise, near Geneva,
Nov. 19, 1764.

IT is very true, as you observe in your letter of the 4th instant, that there is always something coming out in my name, as people often give you made wines instead of foreign ones. The venders of this merchandize deceive themselves more than the public. My wines have always been but indifferent, and those who put my name will never make a fortune.

I have been informed moreover, that they have published in Holland my private letters; the collection, I believe in reality to be very private; for the public will know nothing of it. I cannot indeed help thinking but that it is an affront to the public, and a violation of all the laws of society, to publish any man's letters in his life-time without his consent; but to impute to him such as he never wrote,

wrote, an abominable piece of forgery *. This collection has never yet reached me; I am told it is a very bad one, and therefore give myself no concern about it.

I presume, that in those familiar letters attributed to me, not one of them will begin like that of Tully's, "I shall be glad to hear you are in good health; for myself, I am perfectly well." This would evidently be a lye in print.

I know we have the letters of Henry IV. cardinal d'Ossat, and madam de Sevigné. Young Racine published some of his father's; they were but trifling, and were only pardoned out of respect to his illustrious name; but we are not at liberty to publish the correspondence of obscure men, unless they

* Mr. Voltaire wrote several letters, wherein he disclaimed the *Pucelle* and the *Dictionnaire Philosophique*. The letter before us is full of contradictions and false modesty: he avows and disavows at the same time the private letters printed at Amsterdam, as is evidently proved by Mr. Freron, who was so cruelly and unjustly treated in the *Pucelle*, and many other parts of Voltaire's works, for attacking the inconsistency of his conduct, which Freron discovered and reflected on, perhaps with too much severity; but when authors quarrel, they generally treat each other like pirates. For Voltaire's real character, see a book, much admired, entitled, *The Oracle of the new Philosophers*, by Mr. Guyon.

N. B. This note by the French editor.

they are as agreeable, like the *epistolæ obscurorum virorum*. What entertainment can the public expect from a few useless insipid letters, written by a man retired from the world, to people whom the world know nothing of? It is as ill-advised a thing to print such stuff, as it is ridiculous to read it; for which reason all this kind of frippery sinks into eternal oblivion within a fortnight. Our modern publications resemble the innumerable quantity of flies, that, after buzzing a few days, perish, and give place to others, who quickly undergo the same fate.

Few of our occupations indeed are of much more value or consequence; and he was no fool who first said that all was vanity, except the peaceable enjoyment of ourselves. What I have said would deserve a place in your journal, if it was adorned by your own pen.

I am, Sir, &c.

LETTER

L E T T E R X X V I.

To Mad. DUFIDAN, a Lady celebrated
for her Wit and Understanding.

WE both, so heav'n decrees, have lost our
eyes,

Voltaire the weak, and Dufidan the wise.

And where's the mighty loss? No more we see

The sons of folly, pride, and treachery,

Who, drunk with power, lord it o'er mankind;

Nay, in this little world we all are blind.

The city and the court, the great, the small,

Fortune, and Love, and Plutus govern all;

And all are blind, like us, if, out of five,

One sense alone we lose; but few alive,

With ages like our own, can boast the same.

We live, we think, have honours, friends, and
fame;

And many a pope have seen, and many a king;

Besides, you know, for so the poets sing,

Great Epicurus said, The gift of heav'n

Was a sixth sense, which wou'd alone be giv'n

To its choice fav'rites, well worth all the rest;

But were the soul of perfect light possess,

We'd

We'd better then, my friend, have kept our eyes,
Ev'n though we cou'd not see without our spec-
tacles.

You see, madam, I am a worthy brother, and busied in the affairs of our little ancient republic, few of us being less than ninety. You tell me people are not so agreeable as they were formerly; yet the partridges have the same flavour as they had in our youth, and the flowers the same beauty; but it is not so with mankind: the foundation of every thing is the same; but talents are not so: the talent of making ourselves amiable, which has always been an uncommon one, degenerates like others. It is not you who are changed, but it is the court, and the city, as I hear by those who know them. The reason perhaps is, we have not sufficiently studied the art of pleasing by Moncreif: we are employed about nothing but the fashionable follies of the age.

Reason gains credit slowly, and with pain. How do you think society can be agreeable with all that pedantic rubbish that perpetually surrounds it! You certainly deserve the compliment of a Pucelle: one of your good things is quoted in the notes to that theological work; but at present you must know it is impossible to bring any printed book from foreign parts to Paris. Even the minister whom you mention will not permit me
to

to send any thing under his cover, or directed to him. They are frightened, and I don't know why. Be contented, and if, in a fortnight's time, I don't send you my Joan by some honest traveller, tell Mr. President Hainault he must furnish you with one by means of some hawker or other. It will cost you three livres, and is a very cheap book of divinity.

I am sorry your friend should be so hunted; you must have less of his company, and it is a great loss to you both. I spend my life pleasantly enough in my retreat, and with the family I have got about me. Adieu, my dear friend; take courage, and let us make a virtue of necessity. Do you know this is a proverb taken from Cicero?

LETTER

LETTER XXVII.

To King STANISLAUS, at Luneville.

S I R,

Paradise, April 15, 1760.

I Have nothing but thanks to return your majesty; you are known indeed but by your benevolence, which has gained you the noble title you possess. You instruct the world; you adorn, you relieve, you direct it, both by precept and by example. I have endeavoured at a distance to profit from both as much as I could. We should all endeavour to do as much good in proportion, as your majesty does in your kingdom. You have built fine royal churches, I raise village steeples: Diogenes removed his tub, when the Athenians equipped their fleets. Whilst you relieve a thousand poor distressed wretches, we little folk must relieve ten. It is the duty of princes and of private men, every one according to his condition, to do as much good as he can. Your majesty's last book, which brother Menou transmitted to me by your order, is a new favour conferred on mankind. If any atheists there be in this world, which I do not believe, your book will confute their impious absurdity. The philosophers

phers of our age have happily removed all your majesty's suspicions on that head, and rendered your labours unnecessary. They bless God that, since Newton and Descartes, no atheist has ever appeared in Europe. You have likewise admirably well refuted those who formerly believed that chance had contributed towards the formation of the universe. Your majesty must with the greatest pleasure observe, that there is not a philosopher amongst us who does not consider the word itself as intirely void of all sense and meaning. The greater progress natural and experimental philosophy have made amongst us, the more visibly do we perceive in every thing the hand of the Most High.

The philosophy of our days is full of respect for the deity. It doth not content itself with a barren worship alone; but extends its influence over our manners, and makes our philosophers the best of citizens also. They love their country and their king, submit to the laws, and set examples of loyalty and obedience. They condemn to shame and infamy those pedantic and furious factions, which are equally prejudicial to the royal prerogative, and the peace and happiness of the subject; nor is there, I believe, one of them who would not gladly contribute half his fortune to the support of the kingdom. Continue, Sir, to countenance and protect them by your authority, and
by

by your eloquence to convince the world that men cannot be truly happy; but when kings are philosophers, and have a number of subjects who are philosophers also. Encourage, by your powerful voice, those citizens who teach nothing in their writings and conversation but the love of God, their king, and their country. Confound and destroy at the same time those mad and factious fools, who accuse every man of atheism that is not of their opinion in matters the most indifferent.

The angelic doctor asserts, that all the Jesuits are atheists, because they won't allow the court of Pekin to be idolaters; and Hardouin the Jesuit tells us, that Pascal, Arnauld, and Nicole must be atheists, because they would not be Molinists. Brother Berthier suspects the author of the General History of the same crime, because he does not agree that the Nestorians, conducted by the blue clouds, came from the country of Jacin, in the seventh century, to build Nestorian churches at China. Brother Berthier ought to have known that the clouds conduct nobody to Pekin, and that we ought not to mix old wive's fables with sacred truths. A Briton, some years ago, making some enquiries about the city of Paris, was accused by the abbé de Trublet and Co. of irreligion, on account of the street Tireboudin, and the street Trouffe Vache; and the Briton was obliged

obliged to settle the affair with his accuser at the Chatelet de Paris.

Kings look down with contempt on these little dissentions; they consult the general good, whilst their subjects, enraged one against the other, are always doing private wrongs. A great king, Sir, like your majesty, is neither Jansenist, nor Molinist; he makes reason respectable, and faction ridiculous. He makes even Jesuits good at Lorraine, in spite of themselves. When they are driven out of Portugal, he gives twelve thousand livres a year, a good house, and a convenient cave to our dear brother Menou, that once a year he may have it in his power to serve the friends under his protection. He knows that virtue and religion consist in good morality, and not in contention. He gains a blessing from all, while calumniators are universally detested.

I call to mind, Sir, with the greatest and most respectful acknowledgment, the happy hours which I have passed in your palace, and remember well that you condescended to be the delight of private company, with as much ease as you create public felicity; and that if it is a happiness to be your subject, it is a still greater happiness to be admitted as your friend. I sincerely wish, that a life so useful to the world may be extended beyond the ordinary limits. Aureng-Zeb and Muley-Ishmael

Ishmael lived to above the age of a hundred and five. If God granted such length of days to the infidel princes, what will he not do for Stanislaus the Beneficent?

I am, Sir, with the most profound respect,

yours, &c. &c.

G

LETTER

LETTER XXVIII.

To Mr. L E B R U N*, Secretary to his Serene Highness the Prince of Conti, who had sent Mr. Voltaire a fine Ode on Corneille, and was the first who recommended the niece to, and brought her acquainted with him.

Ferney, Nov. 5, 1760.

I Should have made you wait at least these four months, if I had pretended to answer you

* Mr. Le Brun was the first man of letters who entered warmly into the cause of Mr. Corneille. Mr. Voltaire very generously embraced the opportunity of supporting a family which had been left in great distress by their relation Mr. de Fontenelle, who entirely neglected them. Freron, about this time, not knowing any thing of Voltaire's intention, applied to the comedians, and got a benefit in favour of Corneille's nephew. What Voltaire has done since, is well known. It was a noble thing in him to portion her out from the profits of her uncle's works: that edition, with other presents, got in the whole above sixty thousand livres. To Voltaire in a great measure was owing also the reversion of the sentence against the family of Calas. When the character of Voltaire is canvassed, these actions should not be forgotten.

you in as good verses as your own; I must therefore content myself with telling you in plain prose, that I admire both your ode and your proposal. It is fit, that an old soldier of the great Corneille's should endeavour to be serviceable to the grand-daughter of his general; but when we are building castles and churches, and have relations to provide for, we can't do all we would wish to do for a person who ought to be assisted by the greatest people in the kingdom.

I am old, Sir, but have a niece with me who is a lover of the arts, and has made a proficiency in some of them. If the lady you mention, and whom I suppose you are acquainted with, will accept of such an education as my niece can afford her, she will take care of her as of a daughter, and I will endeavour myself to be a father to her: her own need not be at any expence, and her passage shall be paid to Lyons, where she may wait on Mr. Tronchuin, who will furnish her with a carriage up to my house, or a servant shall meet her with my equipage. If this is agreeable, I am at her service, and hope to thank you to the last hour of my life, for procuring me the honour of doing what Mr. de Fontenelle ought to have done. Part of her entertainment shall be to see us play some

of her grandfather's pieces, and discuss the subjects of Cinna and the Cid.

I have the honour to remain, with all due esteem and respect,

Sir, your, &c.

LETTER

LETTER XXIX.

To Mr. L E B R U N.

S I R,

Delices, Nov. 22, 1760.

IN consequence of your last letter, on the name of Corneille, and the merit of his descendant, as well as on account of another which I received from her, I have resolved to do every thing in my power to serve her. I flatter myself she will not be disgusted at a retreat where she will sometimes meet with men of merit, who have all the respect for her great uncle that is due to him. Mr. La Leu, though an eminent notary of Paris, who lives in your neighbourhood, will, on sight of this letter, immediately reimburse to you the money advanced for the journey of Madem. Corneille. She has no preparations to make, as linen and proper dress of every kind will be provided for her on her arrival. Mr. Tronchuin, banker, at Lyons, will have advice of her coming, and will be ready to receive, and conduct her to me. As you are so obliging as to enter willingly into this little necessary business, I shall submit it entirely to your care, and depend on the in-

terest you take in a matter that concerns a
name so dear to every man of letters.

I am, Sir, with the greatest friendship
and esteem,

Your, &c.

LETTER

LETTER XXX.

To Mademoiselle CORNEILLE.

MADAM,

Delices, Nov. 22, 1760.

YOUR name, your merit, and the letter you honoured me with, increase both in Mrs. Dennis and myself our impatience to receive you, and we hope to deserve the preference you have been so obliging as to favour us with. I must inform you that we pass several months in the year at our country house near Geneva, where notwithstanding you will be accommodated with every thing necessary with regard to the duties of religion; but our principal residence is in France, about a league off, in a very tolerable house, which I am building, and where you will be more commodiously lodged than in the place which I now write from. You will find sufficient amusements in both, either in work, reading, or music. If you have any inclination to learn history and geography, we will send for a master, who I doubt not will think himself highly honoured in teaching any thing

to a niece of the great Corneille, and I shall
be still more so in having you with me.

I am, with the greatest respect,

Madam, yours, &c.

LETTER

LETTER XXXI.

To Mr. the Chevalier de R——X, at Toulouse.

S I R,

Delices, Sept. 20, 1760.

I AM not well enough at present to have as much wit as yourself; you take me at a disadvantage; as Waller said to St. Evremond, you are very good to read things which I have intirely forgot; but you must have too much sense not to see that. —
Mr. Montesquieu received into the academy for having laughed at it, is a piece of drollery, and nothing more. Do as the academy did, Sir, enter into the joke; and above all take care never to read the discourses of Mr. Mallet, unless you are troubled with a want of sleep.

You have explained very well what Montesquieu meant by the word *virtue* in a republic; but if you recollect that the Dutch broiled upon a gridiron the hearts of the two De Witts; if you call to mind how my good neighbours the Swiss sold duke Lewis Sforza for a little ready money; if you re-

member that the republican John Calvin, that worthy divine, after having maintained in his writings that no man should ever be persecuted, not even those who denied the Trinity, burned alive with green fagots a Spaniard who differed with him in opinion on that subject, you will most certainly conclude, that there is no more virtue in a republic than in a monarchy.

Ubicumque calculum ponas, ibi naufragium fere invenies.

The world, my friend, is one great shipwreck: and man's motto, "Save yourself if you can."

I am sorry I said that William the Conqueror disposed of the lives and fortunes of his new subjects like an eastern monarch; you did right in condemning me for it: I should only have said, he abused his victory, as they always do, both in the east and in the west; for most indisputable it is, that no monarch upon earth has a right to divert himself with plundering and killing his subjects just as he thinks proper. We poor historians are too often believed, and the greatest injury we can do mankind is to tell them, as some do, that the princes of the east are very welcome to cut off as many heads as they please. It might very probably happen,
that

that the oriental princes and their confessors might imagine this noble prerogative was by divine right. I have seen many travellers who had passed through Asia, who all shrugged up their shoulders when you talked to them of this pretended despotism independent of the laws. It is true, indeed, that in troublesome times, both the monarchs and ministers of the east are as wicked as our Lewis XI. or Alexander VI. True also it is that men are every where equally inclined to violate the laws, when they are angry, and there is no great difference in this respect from Ireland to Japan. There are, notwithstanding, in every place some honest men, and virtue, improved by science, turns the hell of this world into a paradise.

Your virtue, Sir, as appears by your letter, is of this kind; and the illustrious president Montesquieu would have found in you a friend worthy of him.

A gentleman, whose estate lies, I believe, not far from you, is now with me, and proposes spending some time in my little retreat; it is the Marquis d'Argent. He has convinced me that nothing can be more amiable than a man of honour and virtue, who has wit and genius. I could wish you would do me the same honour, and assure you it would
be

wrote me two or three * letters in your name. These fellows are a set of wretches very unworthy the honour of being solicited for to a man of your merit and consequence†.

I take this opportunity to assure you of the great esteem and respect which I shall always have for you.

I am, Sir, &c.

* The original is "Deux ou trois lettres anonymes sous votre nom." Two or three *anonymous* letters in your name.

This seems to be a kind of buff of Mr. Voltaire's, as one cannot well conceive how the letters signed with Mr. Haller's name could be properly called *anonymous*.

† This letter, says the French editor, full of revenge and disquietude, called for the elegant and sensible answer of the celebrated and inestimable republican Mr. Haller, which we have therefore with great pleasure transcribed. It will let us into the strange and unaccountable character of Mr. de Voltaire.

LETTER

LETTER XXXIII

Mr. HALLER's Answer to Mr. de VOLTAIRE.

S I R,

YOUR letter has given me the greatest concern. I see and admire a gentleman possessed of riches and independency, who has it in his power to choose the best company, equally applauded by monarchs and by the public, and immortalized by fame; and shall I behold this very man losing all his peace and quiet, only in endeavouring to prove, that one man has stolen from him, and * another is not yet convinced whether he has or no?

Providence holds an equal balance to all mankind; it has showered down riches and glory

* In spite of the memorial and certificate (says the French editor) which Mr. Voltaire procured from the sieur Cramer, nothing could be done; though his enemies might probably have advanced something against him, not strictly true: but Mr. Voltaire always shewed too keen a resentment of the trifles which were written against him, as witness his affair with Freron.

glory upon you. You must have your misfortunes also, and it has found out the equal poise against your happiness, by giving you too much sensibility.

The person whom you complain of would lose very little by losing the protection of a man, who has long lain hidden in an obscure corner of the world, and who is happy in having no influence or connections. The laws alone have here power to protect the citizen and the subject. Mr. Grassiet has the care of my library. I have seen Mr. Lerveche, (you mean Laroche) with one Mr. May, an exile, whom I have visited sometimes since his disgrace, and who passed the latter part of his time with this minister.

If either of them have put my name to their letters, and made people believe, that we are more intimate than we really are, I shall certainly, when I see them, resent it as an injury done to me, which from too great a friendship for me you seem to have exaggerated.

If wishes had any power, I would add one to the blessings you enjoy. I would wish you that tranquillity which flies before genius, which perhaps is not of so great value when considered with relation to society,

ciety, but of infinitely more with regard to ourselves; the most celebrated man in Europe would then be also the most happy.

I am, Sir,

Your perfect admirer, &c.

LETTER

LETTER XXXIV.

To Mr. BELLOY, Author of the Siege of Calais, a Tragedy, represented in February, 1765.

S I R,

I AM almost blind, but have still my hearing, and the voice of fame has acquainted me with your astonishing success. I have a heart also that is interested in it: permit me to join, though at so great a distance, my warm applause, with that of the * whole kingdom. Long and uninterrupted may be
your

* All Paris, says the French editor, crowded with rapture to this excellent tragedy, so interesting to every lover of his country. The city of Calais signalized themselves more particularly by the marks of favour shewn both to the tragedy and the author of it. He was crowned for the first time, and the applause of the court equalled that of the city. Nothing less than gold was given to Mr. Belloy. A medal was struck at the Louvre; one side of it represents the king, with these words, *Actium parens*; on the reverse, is Apollo holding a flag, on which is written Corneille, Racine, Moliere; and a little below,

Et

your merit and your happiness! Nothing remains to crown your glory but to be abused by Freron.

I embrace you without ceremony, which, with brother poets, is unnecessary. I am, with great pleasure and sincerity,

Yours, &c.

Et qui nascetur ab illis.

An æra glorious for the poets, and which at the same time does honour to the monarch, who shews such taste and love for genius and abilities.

The extraordinary, tho' deserv'd success of this tragedy, excited the malice of some little poets, who wrote epigrams against the author and his piece.

Epigram, on the Siege of Calais.

Bombast and fustian all, a deal
Of idle prate, and foolish zeal;
A heap of flattery, great pretence,
With very little wit or sense:
Such was the merits join'd to raise it,
And such are all the fools who praise it.

Another, on the same.

Rejoice, ye knaves and fools, I say, rejoice,
All citizens enroll'd by public voice.
A glorious honour, which, in Lewis' reign,
Who sav'd their country only cou'd obtain.
Of old 'twas dearly bought! — but now-a-days
'Tis to be had for — praising Belloy's plays.

There

There follows, in this place, an epigram, as it is called in the original, on the picture of Mr. Belloy; but it is so poor a piece, that it is not worth translating. And likewise another on the word *siege*, which, in French, signifies both *siege* and *seat*; but, as the pun does not answer in English, it could not be translated.

LETTER

L E T T E R XXXV.

PARODY of Mr. VOLTAIRE's Letter to
BELLOY.

BLIND tho' I am, my friend, I still can hear
 The voice of fame, which thunders in my ear,
 And talks for ever of thy charming lays,
 Which make ev'n malice smile, and envy praise:
 The patriot and the poet all commend;
 Whoe'er is Belloy's must be France's friend.
 Equall'd by few, by fewer still surpass'd,
 Long may thy merit, long thy praises last.
 One honour still remains, and one alone,
 To crown thy fame, the censure of Freron.
 Whilst I from envy, pride, and malice free,
 Who look not on thee with base jealousy,
 In brother bards unseemly, give thee joy;
 Nor steal we from le Franc, or poor * Rosoy.

* Mr Du Rosoy, author of a tragedy called the
 Siege of Calais, printed about two months before the
 appearance of Mr. du Belloy's, was imprisoned at Fort
 l'Evigne, for endeavouring to persuade the public, that
 the players communicated that piece in manuscript to
 Mr. du Belloy. This young man, who is but an in-
 different poet, quarrelled with some persons of the first
 consequence. He even went so far as to accuse M. du
 Clairon of having stolen the manuscript of the tragedy
 of Cromwell from the Sieur Morand, who has been
 dead

dead these ten years. Unhappily the world, and particularly Mr. Morand's friends believed the accusation.

N. B. This note by the French editor.

The above Parody is a very poor piece of poetry, as well in the original as in the translation, and seems not to have been written by Voltaire, though inserted amongst his letters by the French editor.

BLIND tho' I am, my friend, I still can hear
The voice of fame, which thunders in my ear,
And talks for ever of thy charming days,
Which make ev'n a make believe, and every place
The joy of and the best all countenances;
Where'er is Belloy's, must be France's friend,
I quail'd by few, by fewer still supersed;
Long may thy name, long thy praises last,
One honour still remains, and one alone,
To crown thy name, the crown of France,
Which, from day, place, and nation flies,
Who look not on thee with hate jealousy,
In brother hearts unceasing, give thee joy;
Nor feel we from le Franc, or poor * Roly.

* Mr. De Roly, author of a tragedy called the
Glorious Captive, which about two months before the
publication of Belloy's, was published at Paris
under the name of Belloy, was intended as a
parody, for endeavouring to persuade the public that
the play communicated that piece in manuscript to
Mr. de Belloy. This young man, who is but an in-
different poet, distinguished with some persons of the first
rank, was even to far as to receive Mr. de
Belloy's having seen the manuscript of the tragedy
of Cromwell from the same friend, who has been
dead

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LETTER XXXVI.

To the Marquis de VILLETE, Son of
the Treasurer.

HOW few are those who teach while they de-
light!

How few, like thee, who think as well as write:

But reason with the sister graces join'd

To give thee perfect empire o'er the mind;

Thus with his lyre Apollo wins our hearts,

And kills the serpent Python with his darts.

'Tis the same great, the same all-pow'ful god,

Who quells the savage monsters of the wood,

As he whose active and enliv'ning ray,

Gives warmth to nature, and lights up the day.

But more a god he is, when to the charms

Of love he yields, and sports in Daphne's arms.

The less, Sir, that the owl of Ferney de-
serves your fine verses, the more ought he
to thank you for them: he interests him-
self in every thing that concerns you, because
he knows your worth.

In

In thee we, as in others, find
 The venial faults of heedless youth;
 But pardon foibles, where the mind
 Is fraught with wisdom and with truth.

I shall retain you as one of the best advocates for our philosophy, and I hereby give you notice of it; all will by and by be unveiled to you; you shall be one of us.

To be good-natur'd, easy, gay, and free,
 Is man's due tribute to society:
 For others this; and to ourselves remains
 The duty to be — happy for our pains.

We have one little new cell, and are building another. You know how much you are beloved in our convent *.

* The French editor, in a note to this letter, has given us some very dull anecdotes concerning the marquis to whom it is addressed, which, as they could afford no entertainment to the reader, are omitted.

LETTER

LETTER XXXVII.

To Mr. D'AMOUREUX*.

MY DEAR FRIEND, Ferney, March 1, 1765.

I Have read over with the greatest satisfaction the new memoirs of the innocent family of Calas, by Mr. Beaumont. I admired, and even shed tears over it; but I learned nothing from thence which I did not know before. I have been thoroughly convinced with regard to that point for some time past, and had the happiness of procuring the first satisfactory proofs of it.

You seem desirous to know how this universal abhorrence of it has happened,
H that

* This letter, says the French editor, has been already published: we have reprinted it here, with additions, or more properly speaking, the restoration of a long passage, which was not suffered to appear in the Paris edition; we mean that part of it which concerns Mr. Rousseau of Geneva. It is so far particularly valuable, as it gives us a farther insight into the character of Mr. Voltaire, and his opinion of that celebrated philosopher.

that all Europe cries out against this legal murder of poor Calas, broke upon the wheel at Toulouse, and how it came to pass that the discovery of this dreadful piece of injustice should take its rise in a little unknown corner of the world, between the Alps and mount Jura, a hundred leagues distance from the scene of this mournful tragedy.

About the end of March, 1762, a traveller, who had passed through Languedoc, came to see me at my little retreat, two leagues from Geneva, who acquainted me with the punishment of Calas; and at the same time assured me, that he was perfectly innocent. I observed to him, that it was scarce probable he could have committed the crime; and still less probable that the judges, who had no private interest in the affair, could condemn an innocent man to be broke upon the wheel.

The day after, I was informed that one of the children of this unhappy father had taken refuge in Switzerland, not far from my little cottage. His flight inclined me to think the family guilty. I reflected, notwithstanding, that the father had been condemned for assassinating, without any accomplice, his own son on account of his religion, and that this man was sixty-nine years

years of age at the time of his death. I never remember to have heard of any old man who was so horrible an enthusiast. I had always remarked, that this kind of religious rage seldom attacked any but a young man, whose lively, weak, and tumultuous imagination is frequently inflamed by superstition. The fanatics of the Cevennes were all madmen of between twenty and thirty, and taught from their infancy to stile themselves prophets. The convulsionists, many of whom I saw at Paris, were all little girls, or young fellows; the old men in our monasteries are not so susceptible of furious zeal as those who are just out of their noviciate. All the remarkable assassins, who were armed by fanaticism, have been young men, as well as those who pretended to be possessed, and I never heard of an old man's being exorcised. This consideration induced me to doubt of his guilt; besides that, the crime was to the last degree unnatural.

I ordered the young man to be brought to me, and expected to find him one of those wild enthusiasts whom I have frequently met with in his country; instead of which, I saw before me a simple lad, open and ingenuous, with a countenance of the utmost softness, and which at once interested you in his favour, and who, whilst he was speaking to me, endeavoured, but in vain,

to hide the tears that fell from him. He told me he had been apprentice to a manufacturer at Nîmes, where it was the public talk that his whole family at Toulouse would soon be condemned to death; that all Languedoc believed them guilty; and that, to avoid such dreadful ignominy, he had fled to Switzerland.

I asked him if his father and mother had the character of being passionate and cruel? He assured me to the contrary, and that they had never beat one of their children in their whole lives; but on the other hand, were the most tender and indulgent parents. I must own to you this thoroughly convinced me of their innocence. I received more information, a little after, from two merchants at Geneva, men of undoubted probity, who had lodged with Calas at Toulouse; they confirmed me in my opinion. Far from thinking the family of Calas a set of parricides and fanatics, I began to see that they had been accused and ruined by some vile enthusiasts. Long since had I experienced what the spirit of party and calumny were capable of.

But what was my astonishment, when, on my writing to Languedoc concerning this strange affair, both Catholics and Protestants assured me, in answer, that no doubt was to be

be made of Calas's guilt; but I was not yet deterred. I took the liberty to write to the Governors of the province, and all the neighbouring places, and even to the ministers of state. All unanimously advised me not to interfere any farther. Every body condemned me, and I still persisted. Such, Sir, was my conduct.

The widow of Calas, from whom, to crown her misfortunes, they had taken away her daughters, was retired into solitude, to indulge her griefs, and wait for that death which she every day expected. I did not inquire whether she was a Protestant, but only whether she believed in a God, the rewarder of virtue, and the avenger of guilt. I asked her, whether, in the name of that God, she would attest, under her own hand, that her husband died innocent: she never hesitated in the least; no more did I. I desired Mr. Mariette to take her defence to the king's council. Mad. Calas was obliged to leave her retreat, and undertake her journey to Paris.

We see by this, that if there are great crimes in the world, there are perhaps as many virtues; and that if superstition produces misfortunes, philosophy can repair them.

A lady, whose generosity was equal to her high birth, and who had been some time at Geneva to inoculate her daughters, was the first that assisted this unfortunate family. Several French, who had retired into this country, contributed also. The English travellers distinguished themselves more particularly in this affair. As Mr. Beaumont observes, there was a contest of generosity between the two nations, which should be the most forward in succouring virtue thus cruelly oppressed.

What followed no one knows better than yourself; who laboured in the cause of innocence with more zeal and intrepidity? How nobly did you encourage those orators who were heard by France and by all Europe with so much attention! It recalled to mind the times when Cicero defended Amerinus, accused of parricide, before the senate. Some persons, indeed, who stiled themselves holy and devout, declared against Calas; but, for the first time since the establishment of fanaticism, the voice of wisdom put them to silence.

Reason may now indeed be said to have gained a glorious victory amongst us; but would you believe it, my dear friend! the family of Calas, so nobly assisted, and so well revenged, was not the only one ac-
cused

cused of parricide on a religious pretext; not the only one who has been sacrificed to the rage of prejudice; there is one which is yet more unhappy, because whilst it experienced the same misfortunes, it has not met with the same consolation, or found a Mariette, a * Beaumont, and a Loiseau.

It should seem that there still dwells in Languedoc an infernal fury, brought thither in former times by the inquisitors in the train of Simon de Montfort, and that ever since those days she continues, every now and then, to shake her torch amongst us.

A lawyer of Castres, whose name was Sirven, had three daughters: as the family were Protestants, the youngest of the daughters was stolen away from her mother, put into a convent, and well whipped, to teach her her catechism: she runs mad, and throws herself into a well about a league from her

H 4

father's

* Mr. Beaumont, to the honour of humanity, seems resolved to defend the cause of the Sirvens, as he has already done that of Ca'as, which I remarked to him at the time when he wrote me this letter.

N. B. This note by the French editor, who, according to the last sentence in it, should seem to be the person to whom this letter is addressed, Mr. D'A-moureux.

father's house. The zealots immediately conclude, that the father, mother, and sisters had drowned the child. It was taken for granted amongst the Catholicks of that province, that the Protestants always make it a rule for fathers and mothers to hang, drown, or cut the throats of all those children who shew any inclination towards the Romish religion. This was at the very time when the family of Calas was in prison, and the scaffold prepared for them.

The affair of the drowned child soon reached Toulouse. Here, said they, is a new instance of a father and mother convicted of parricide. The rage of the populace increased; Calas was broke upon the wheel, and a warrant issued out against Sirven, his wife, and daughter. Sirven had just time to escape with his sick family; they travelled on foot, and without any provisions, over cragged mountains covered with snow. One of the daughters was brought to bed in the midst of all the ice and cold, and dying herself, carried her dying infant in her arms. They bent their course toward Switzerland. The same chance which conducted the children of Calas decreed that these also should put themselves under my protection.

Figure

Figure to yourself, my friend, four sheep, whom the butchers accuse of having slain a lamb; such was the sight I had before me. So much innocence, joined to so much misery, it is impossible to describe. What could I do? What would you have done in my situation? Must one be content to weep over human nature? I took the liberty to write to the first president of Languedoc, a sensible and good man; but he was not at Toulouse. By means of a friend of ours I got a placet presented to the vice-chancellor. During this time the father, mother, and two daughters were hung in effigy near Castres, their goods confiscated, and not a shilling left to support them.

Here, Sir, is a whole honest, virtuous, innocent family given up to beggary and ruin, and in a strange country. They meet indeed with compassion; but how hard it is to remain an object of compassion all our lives. At last, I am told, that a pardon shall be procured for them. I thought at first they meant the judges, and that the pardon was for them. You must be satisfied that this wretched family would rather beg their bread from door to door, and die with hunger, than sue for the pardon of a crime they were never guilty of, and which is too horrible, were they so, even to deserve it. And yet how are they to obtain

justice? How surrender themselves to prison in a country where half the people still believe the murder of Calas justifiable? Must they go a second time to demand a new trial? Must they endeavour again to excite the public pity, which the misfortunes of Calas have already exhausted, and which will grow tired of always having accusations of parricide to refute, condemned persons to acquit, and judges to confute?

Are not two such tragical events, happening so close to each other, my dear friend, proofs of that unavoidable fatality to which our miserable race is subjected? That dreadful truth, so often told us by Homer and by Sophocles, an useful one indeed, as it may teach us patience and resignation.

Must I add, on this occasion, that whilst these astonishing events touched me in the tenderest manner, and affected me to the last degree, a man whose profession you will guess at by what he said, reproached me with the interest I had taken in two families, that were utter strangers to me. Why, said he, do you trouble yourself about them? Let the dead bury the dead. To which I replied: I have found in my desert an Israelite bathed in his own blood; permit me to pour oil into his wounds. You are a Levite; let me be a Samaritan.

They

They treated me indeed like a Samaritan, made a defamatory libel upon me, which they called a Pastoral Letter; but it was the work of a Jesuit, and should be forgotten. The wretch did not know that I had at that time taken a Jesuit under my protection. Could I give a stronger proof that we should look upon our enemies as our brethren?

This melancholy madman, formerly a little petty citizen of Geneva, is eternally clamouring against me, and crying out in his convulsions, that I persecute and pursue him from place to place, and, in the end, shall force him to hang himself; so much have I set the ministers of the gospel and the magistrates of the country against both his writings and his person. He writes all these fine things to a great lady at Paris, who admires his eloquence more than that of Cicero or Bossuet, and loves her John James * like her lap-dog. This good lady spreads her pretty little stories about amongst other good ladies, who tell them to the very good ladies at court, till all these agreeable gossips are insensibly as it were persuaded into a most cordial hatred of me, either upon the strength of

* John James Rousseau, the celebrated writer and philosopher, so well known by his *New Elois*, &c. now in England.

of her word, or from mere idleness. Good God! of me, who never so much as pronounced the name of John James four times in my life; who never read any of his melancholy reveries, because I hold it as an established maxim, that he who would live long must always laugh; me who, for these ten years past, did not know whether this Allobrogian Hercules existed or not; who thought he had been shut up in some hospital, or wedged into the trunk of some old tree in the sublime forests of philosophic Switzerland.

Your passions are humanity, love of truth, and hatred of calumny. Conformity of character produced our friendship. I have spent my life in searching for and publishing that truth which I revere; what other modern historian has defended the memory of a great prince against the shameful impostures of an * obscure writer, whom one may properly stile the calumniator of kings, ministers, and generals, and who notwithstanding is no longer read?

I have

* Mr. Voltaire; according to the French editor, alludes to the memoirs of Mad. Maintenon, by Mr. de la Beaumelle, an author who had treated Mr. Voltaire, in several of his performances, with great severity.

I have done nothing more therefore with regard to the dreadful calamities of Calas and Sirven, than what every other man would have done, followed the bent of my own inclination. The aim of a philosopher is not to lament the wretched, but to serve them.

I know the rage with which fanaticism would persecute philosophy, whose daughters, truth and toleration, she would destroy, as she did poor Calas; whilst Philosophy only wishes to disarm the children of fanaticism, falsehood and persecution.

Those who are not able to reason, have always endeavoured to discredit those who are. They have confounded the philosopher with the sophist, and miserably deceive themselves. The true philosopher will sometimes indeed shew his indignation against that calumny which pursues him: he may overwhelm in eternal infamy the base, mercenary, hireling scribler*, who twice in the month affronts truth, reason, taste, and virtue. He may, as he goes along, sacrifice to ridicule and contempt those who insult literature even in the sanctuary, where they ought most to revere it; but at the same time

* This alludes most probably to the *Année* likewise, a kind of review published in France, and supposed to be written by Freron.

time he is a stranger to cabals, party-prejudice, and revenge. He studies with the wise Montbar *, and the philosopher of † Voré, to make the earth more fertile, and its inhabitants more happy. He clears the lands that are uncultivated, increases the number of ploughs, and consequently of men also; employs and feeds the poor, encourages matrimony, relieves the orphan, never murmurs against necessary taxes, but enables the husbandman to pay them with chearfulness. He expects nothing from the world, but does all in his power to serve it; abhors the hypocrite, pities the superstitious, and, in short, is a friend to all mankind.

I perceive

* Author of an excellent work, intituled *Natural History*.

† The celebrated Helvetius, author of the *Livre de l'Esprit*, or *A Treatise on the Faculties of the Mind*. The most humane and generous creature upon earth. The inhabitants of Voré, where he lived, are continually blessing and praying for him. He was persecuted and banished on account of his treatise. The hypocrites and devotees of the court, those cruel and vindictive spirits, conspired to destroy him; but the public, which always does justice to virtue and abilities, have amply repaid him for the injuries and contempt which he met with at court.

Such, adds the French editor, was also the fate of the sublime Mirebeau, who fell a victim to sixty tax-gatherers of France, who procured an order to imprison him in the castle of Vincennes.

I perceive I am drawing your portrait, and that it wants nothing to make it perfectly like, but your being happy enough to live in the country *.

* After the publication of this letter, Freron, in his *Année*, likewise put out a letter from a Protestant philosopher, which was very severe both on Calas and Voltaire, which probably gave occasion to the following letter from Mr. D'Argenu.

[illegible]

LETTER

most of them, according to the 1900 census.

LETTER XXXVIII.

From the Marquis D'ARGENU*,
Brigadier General.

*

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I Have lately read, in a little periodical paper, called, *The Annals of Literature*, a satire, occasioned by a piece of justice done to the family of Calas, by the supreme tribunal of the masters of requests, which has raised the indignation of all honest men, as I am told most of these papers do. The author, by a very stale device, which every body sees through, pretends that he received a letter from a Protestant philosopher, who tells him, that if the world were to determine concerning that affair from Mr. Voltaire's letter, which has circulated over Europe, they would entertain but a very false idea of it. The author of the paper does not venture directly to attack the masters of requests; but seems to hope his censure of Voltaire will fall upon them, as they all proceeded on the same evidence.

He

LETTER

* We are informed by whom, but not to whom, this letter was written; but may conjecture it was most probably addressed to the French editor.

He begins by endeavouring to destroy that favourable presumption which all the lawyers went upon, that it was not natural to suppose a father should assassinate his son, merely on a supposition of his being inclined to change his religion. He opposes to this argument, the validity of which is so universally acknowledged, the example of Junius Brutus, supposed to have condemned his son to death, and is so blind as not to see that Junius Brutus was a judge, who with the greatest concern sacrificed nature to duty. What kind of comparison can there be between a severe sentence and an execrable assassination! between an act of duty and a parricide, and such a parricide too! which, if it had been committed, the father, mother, brother, and friend, must all have been accomplices in!

He goes so far as to assert, that if the sons of Calas did actually say there never was a more tender and indulgent father, and that he had never beat one of his children, it is rather a proof of the simplicity of those who believed this deposition, than any mark of innocence in the accused. It is true, indeed, that it is not an absolute legal proof; but surely it is highly probable: it was a powerful motive for a further examination, and Mr. Voltaire was only at that time in search of such circumstances as might determine him to enter thoroughly into this interesting affair, concerning

concerning which he afterwards produced such convincing proofs, which had been procured for him at Toulouse.

But there is something still more absurd. Mr. Voltaire, with whom he passed three months near Geneva, at the time when he undertook this affair, insisted on it, before he engaged, that Mad. Calas, whom he knew to be a very religious woman, should swear in the name of that God whom she adored, that neither her husband or self had the least concern in it. This oath had great weight, as it was hardly possible Mad. Calas should swear falsely, or run the hazard of coming to Paris, and expose herself to the severity of the law. She was intirely out of the cause; nothing obliged her to take so dangerous a step as to recommence a criminal process, in which she might have lost her life. This author seems not to know how much it must shock a person, with any sense of religion, to be guilty of perjury; but this he says is a false method of reasoning; "it is just as if we were to ask one of the judges who had condemned Calas," &c.

But how absurd is the comparison! The judge, no doubt, will make oath, that he judged according to his conscience; but this conscience might have been imposed on by false evidence: whereas Mad. Calas could never

ver be deceived or imposed on with regard to the crime imputed to her husband or herself. The accused must know in their own hearts whether they were guilty or not; but the judge can only know it by the evidence, which is often equivocal; the writer of the paper therefore must have argued (for I love to call things by their names) with as much folly as malignity.

He makes bold to deny it was ever "believed in Languedoc, that the Protestants make it a point to destroy those children whom they suspect of any design to change their religion." These are the words of this very silly writer. He does not know that this accusation was so seriously and so universally believed, that Mr. Sudre, the famous advocate of Toulouse, who gave us an excellent memorial in favour of the Calas family, has there refuted this popular error in page 59, 60, and 61, of his account. He does not perhaps know likewise, that the church of Geneva was obliged to send to Toulouse a solemn protest against this horrible accusation.

He makes himself merry with this serious and important affair, and laughs at the scheme of writing to the governors of Languedoc and Provence, to get proper information from them, that they might know how
to

to proceed. What could have been done better for this purpose?

I shall say nothing of the little witticisms scattered about in this paper. The innocence of Calas, and the solemn decree made by the masters of requests, are things of too much consequence to be debased by the mixture of such trifles.

I ask pardon of Mr. Voltaire for joining his name to that of such a man as Freron; but as these poor and miserable scriblers are suffered at Paris to abuse genius and merit, I thought a soldier, actuated by a sense of honour, might be permitted to speak his sentiments on the occasion; and I am satisfied you may safely impart my thoughts to all lovers of truth.

You know how much I am, &c.

LETTER

LETTER XXXIX.

To the Marquis D'ARGENU.

THE letter you was so obliging as to write, shews at once the goodness of your heart, and the excellency of your understanding. You acquaint me at this time with the insolence and baseness of Freron, which I was before a stranger to, having never lit of his paper. That chance which furnished you with one of them, was never, I thank her, so unkind to me; but you have extracted gold from his dunghill, by confuting his calumnies. +

If this man had read the letter which Mad. Calas wrote from her retreat, where she was almost expiring, and from whence they dragged her with the greatest difficulty; if he had seen the candour, the grief, the resignation, which she expressed in her recital of the murder of her son and husband, and that irresistible air of truth with which she called God to witness her innocence, he would not, I believe, have been touched himself, but he must have seen that every honest heart would be touched and convinced also.

But

But tyrants cannot feel the force of nature,
Nor can a Freron feel the pow'r of virtue.

As to marshal Richelieu, and the duke of Villars, whose protection he seems so much to undervalue, and whose testimony he rejects, he does not perhaps know that it was at my house they saw young Calas, whom I had the honour to present to them, and that most assuredly they did not protect him till they had enquired into the affair; after suspending their judgment a long time, which every wise man ought to do, before his final decision.

As to the masters of requests, it is their business to see whether, after their sovereign determination, which had confirmed the innocence of Calas and his family, a Freron should be permitted to call it in question.

I embrace, love, and respect you,

And am, &c.

LETTER

LETTER XL.

To the Abbé de VOISENON.

I Had a little stunted vine,
Which brought me neither leaves nor wine,
An honest gard'ner came, and drest
And trimm'd it so, that ev'ry guest
Who us'd to rail at, honour'd me
For my high-flavour'd Burgundy.

I had a rough unpolish'd stone,
Which few would deign to look upon ;
An artist saw the useless thing,
He cut and form'd it to a ring;
You see it now a diamond fine,
And brighter than its master shine.

What nature leaves unfinish'd, art can mend.
Alas ! what should we do without a friend ?

You will easily guess, my lord bishop of
Montrouge, to whom those bad verses are
addressed. Present my compliments to Mr.
Favart, who is one of those deities who pre-
side over the genius of French gaiety. As it
is ten years since you wrote to me, I dare not
cry

cry out, Write to me, my friend; but I must say, O my friend, you have quite forgotten me.

TO THE LADY OF V. O. I. A. M. Q. M.

My dear friend,
I have just received your letter of the 10th inst. and am
glad to hear from you. I am well and hope these few lines
will find you the same. I am sure you are very busy
at present, but I thought I would write a few lines to
let you know I am still thinking of you.

I am sure you are very busy at present, but I thought I would write a few lines to let you know I am still thinking of you. I am sure you are very busy at present, but I thought I would write a few lines to let you know I am still thinking of you.

I am sure you are very busy at present, but I thought I would write a few lines to let you know I am still thinking of you.

Yours very truly,
LETTER
I am sure you are very busy at present, but I thought I would write a few lines to let you know I am still thinking of you.

LETTER XLI.

THE ANSWER.

Ingenious Favart, prais'd by thee,
Aspires to immortality.

On ev'ry bard whom you approve,
Apollo looks with smiles of love;
Consigns the gardens to his care,

And to adorn his patron's hair,
He form'd of flow'rs the choicest band
That fell from thy all-pleasing hand;
As thou art for his master known,
He counts thy treasures as his own.

Whilst thy example thus the poet fires,
He gives to thee the verse thy praise inspires.

He would not have failed offering his comedy of Gratitude to you; but he has a timidity natural to men of genius, and feared it was not worthy of your acceptance. You will hardly believe that, in spite of all his merit, the ill-natured world will not allow him to be the author of his own excellent works; but maliciously and unanimously at-

I tribute

tribute half of them to * me. I am sure you will not fall into this mistake, when he uses your stuff to make his holiday cloaths of ; you don't make it a point to strip him of them.

He will send you immediately his *Fairy Urgelia*, which has met with success at Fontainebleau; which I am just now come from. This may be no reason why the piece should succeed at Paris. The court is the chatelet of Paris, and Paris is the grand chamber, which almost always reverses its decrees. You indeed furnished him with the subject

* The public have unanimously, says the French editor, attributed the most delicate and agreeable parts of Mr. Favart's works to M. de Voisenon; and it must be acknowledged that there is a great similitude of style and manner between the *Annette and Lubin*, the three sultanas and the *Englishman at Bourdeaux*, and all the new pieces published by Mr. and Mad. Favart, with whom Mr. de Voisenon has been a long time connected. The author of the *Queen of Golconda*, *Misapouf*, so much the worse for her, and other very agreeable novels, may very possibly have composed love sonnets and smart epigrams. It is likewise said, that Mr. Favart was not the author of *La Chercheuse d'Esprit*, a charming little piece, and generally attributed to the marquis of P—, who is certainly very capable of writing it.

The prediction in the letter concerning the *Fairy Urgelia* was fulfilled. This piece, so strongly talked of, so warmly desired, and so highly applauded at court, was received very coldly at Paris. In spite of all the fine habits and decorations bestowed upon it, it did not succeed at all.

subject of this work, which will be its best recommendation. Adieu, my best and oldest friend; I shall not cease to be yours till the parliament shall recall the Jesuits, nor shall I ever forget you till I have forgot to read.

Yours, Nov. 20. 1763.

I am greatly obliged to you for the opportunity you have given me of participating that pleasure which all Paris has tasted in your excellent performance. I am not at all surpris'd at the success of it: it has not only in it a variety of pleasing subjects, but is full of pyrrhic and natural dialogue, and is as well written as played. You will not, I hope, stop here; but go on to enrich our stage. It is the greatest comfort of my old age to see these fine arts, which I love, adorned and supported by men of such merit and genius.

LETTER

21. 11. 1763

LETTER XLII.

To Mr. CAVAILHA, Author of
a Comedy called the TUTOR DUPED,
which met with Success on the French
Theatre.

S I R,

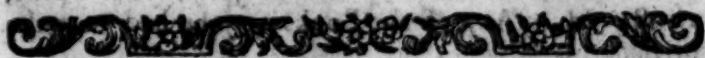
Ferney, Nov. 30, 1765.

I Am greatly obliged to you for the opportunity you have given me of participating that pleasure which all Paris has tasted in your excellent performance. I am not at all surprized at the success of it: it has not only in it a variety of pleasing incidents, but is set off by easy and natural dialogue, and is as well written as played. You will not, I hope, stop here; but go on to enrich our stage. It is the greatest comfort of my old age to see these fine arts, which I love, adorned and supported by men of such merit and genius.



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